ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
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A THEOLOGICAL ENQUIRY INTO MY PRACTICE OF CO-CURATING THE EUCHARIST WITH CHILDREN

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at two parish churches in Derby:
St Andrew with St Osmund Derby
and St Edmund Allenton and Shelton Lock

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY ABSTRACT
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Abstract

This research answers the question whether children helping to co-curate the Eucharist as it is practised in two Derby churches can contribute to the spiritual flourishing of people. The rationale for an empirical research method is to answer a question where there is little evidence and because the topic is of direct practical relevance to issues of inclusion and communion in the researcher's own work and practice as a parish priest in the Church of England.

The primary data was derived from Participatory Action Research. Three sets of co-researchers drawn from children, adults from the local community and adult members of two congregations, shared their experiences of one or more services without and with co-curation of the Eucharist with children. An inductive methodology was used in a qualitative, constant comparative and thematic method of data analysis. Conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist drawn from literature were used as primary nodes. Within an Action Research living theory approach the researcher's journal provided a further data source.

The data found attentive presence to be a unifying concept important to spiritual flourishing. Liturgical action was found to be a significant factor in the experience of the Eucharist. The children's experiences co-curating with adults showed that involvement in the liturgical action directly related to feelings of empowerment and features of Christian discipleship. The findings also show that the children at the centre of intergenerational worship in this context may be seen as theological agents for transformation.

The research concludes that children co-curating the Eucharist contributes to attentive presence. Attentive presence is transformative. A focus on generating opportunities for attentive presence may be a useful tool for worship curators. This tried and tested methodology can be of practical use to researchers of worshipping communities.

Key words: inclusion; attentive presence; children; the Eucharist; living theory; Participatory Action Research

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of co-curating the eucharist with children

CONFIDENTIALITY

Attention is drawn to the fact that the names of the children and adults cited in this research have been changed.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

AR	Action Research
BCCCGMC	British Council of Churches Consultative Group on Ministry among Children
C of E	Church of England
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PCC	Parochial Church Council
St E	St Edmund's Church
St O	St Osmund's Church

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‘it felt like you were part of a puzzle almost of a church,
you know like a puzzle of a thing that’s going to happen’

Part 1 Backgrounds and Contexts

Introduction

From my context, experience, and values I wish to question the dominant view and practice of how children are part of services in the Church of England (C of E). I have examined literature which might offer alternative ways of understanding and practice and conducted research into trying something different out that I have called co-curation of the Eucharist with children. Furthermore I have researched the reported experiences of both adults and children in taking part in this ‘trying something different out’. Through a distinctive Participatory form of living theory Action Research methodology (PAR) I have found that the data yields a deeper understanding of the issues and indicates positive benefits from the new practice of co-curating the Eucharist. Through a conceptual analysis of the data I have found attentive presence to be a unifying concept. I wish to commend this finding for further practise and research. I also wish to commend my research methodology as offering something new to Church of England (C of E) research in parishes.

My research concerns a question that has vexed me for some time as an Anglican priest: does the presence of children alongside adults in the Eucharist helping to make worship happen - contribute to the spiritual flourishing of the church? As a priest and practical theologian I have sought to find answers to this question in my own practice and in the theory and practice of the wider church. My research enquiry is unique in this field. I have found no qualitative research involving, in one research study, the voices of children, adults outside the worshipping community and adults from within, concerned as co-researchers with the spiritual impact of the presence of children as co-curators of the Eucharist. Furthermore, my method is rare in using both children and adults as researchers of the same phenomenon. The boundaries for the research enquiry are set within the context of the Eucharist as the principal Sunday service in the C of E and the curation of the liturgy for this act of corporate worship. The research is concerned with the presence of children in this type of service.

The enquiry is not concerned with testing a pre-conceived theory. A deductive approach would serve no useful purpose in enabling my co-researchers, congregations and me to arrive at new understandings about the presence of children in the Eucharist. Furthermore, deductive approaches do not fit with Action Research (AR) which is by necessity inductive, as AR begins with a problem to solve arising from reflection upon experience, and involves collaboration and is always contextual (Graham, 2013, p151).

My first experience of using AR was as a secondary school teacher. As part of an MBA I researched management and leadership with focus groups in an 11-18 Welsh school in an ex-mining community. As with all research using AR the results were born out of the direct experiences of those involved in the context and effected change to a collegial approach in the management structures of the school.

This new empirical research takes the principles of AR to inform a distinctive living theory participatory method, with children and adults as co-researchers and the findings have been transformative in my churches. This has been a learning journey with my co-researchers in exploring, discovering and reflecting upon what it feels like to be part of the Eucharist when children are helping to make it happen. The findings show that children can be theological agents for change in liturgical worship and that the presence of children can transform the worship experience of others thereby contributing to the spiritual flourishing of the church.

Spiritual flourishing is a term that will recur in this thesis and is often used today in secular contexts. For example, we find the term used in the English school curriculum (Pridmore, 2017, pp.24-25). It is important to clarify, 'spiritual' in this thesis is understood as Christian spirituality because it is 'ecclesial' in context. That is not to negate transcendent experiences where the person has no knowledge or understanding of the Christian faith. On the contrary, from the perspective of a person with faith I would see all such experiences as 'an awareness of the other and the beyond' (2017, p.25). Hay and Nye state:

> Spirituality is the bedrock on which rests the welfare, not only of the individual but also of society, and indeed the health of our entire planetary environment: 1998, p.153

When both these are present a worshipping community may be described as spiritually flourishing, denoting a healthy church. Spiritual flourishing isn't achieved

by grandiose or pious gestures but by simple signs such as witnessing the attentive presence of a child carrying out a liturgical action. Nye's research of children's spirituality concludes:

> Children may be the model for adult spiritual development, rather than the reverse…a task for adult spiritual development may be to recapture the child's more inclusive and all-pervading sense of relation to the spiritual which means that for them it is normally 'everyday' rather than dramatic
> Hay and Nye, 1998, p.137

This thesis is concerned with a practice of co-curating eucharistic worship with children, which can deepen the experience of the curatorial. Curation is the term employed by some in the field of preparing worship that I am using to describe the ways the liturgy and liturgical actions inform worship (Baker, 2010; Pierson, 2012). Co-curation is a term borrowed from the field of museum curation to describe new ways of involving the public in curation throughout the installation process (Boon, 2011; Obrist, 2016). This directly relates to my contention that enacting liturgy is a corporate endeavour. The curatorial is the experience of co-curating: the 'what happens' in the experiences of those who experience what is being curated (Martinon, 2013).

I first explored curation and co-curation in Stage 1, Paper 1 of this Professional Doctorate (Appendix 1). Drawing upon journal notes arising from a personal childhood experience, my spiritual journey with the Taizé Community and the practice of Godly Play with children, I surveyed literature in the fields of biblical theology, children's spirituality and worship curation. It was here that I first presented an argument for the importance of co-curation with children as a spiritual practice.

In Paper 2 (Appendix 2) I expanded the review of literature to develop an argument: why co-curate worship with children? The focus was from the perspective of challenging the practices that inhibit children from being full participants in the Eucharist (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.237).

These early papers formed the basis of a published article where the practice of co-curating the Eucharist with children was explored to address the theological question of what it means for children to be at the centre of Eucharistic worship as an expression of the Kingdom of God. The argument presented, was that the practice of co-curating the Eucharist with children, is important to developing a worshipping

community with a pilgrim model for discipleship (Morris, 2016).

The third paper for Stage 1 presented the context, focus and rationale for a research enquiry where, drawing upon the earlier papers, I established for the first time that the research focus would be on the question of whether co-curation with children at the Eucharist is important to spiritual flourishing. An examination and detailed survey of research methods led to the decision to use Action Research and living theory as the basis for the research design (Appendix 3). Key to the proposal was an advanced ethics application to Anglia Ruskin University because children would be involved in the research (Appendix 7). A summary of the research methodology and outcomes can be found in the publication: *Godly Play - European Perspectives on Practice and Research* (Morris, 2018, pp. 335-341).

From a literature research four theories were arrived at which offer a perspective on the research enquiry: a pilgrim model of church, co-curation, an experiential understanding of education and children's spirituality as relational. From an examination of these theoretical perspectives I identified three themes important to co-curating the Eucharist with children.

First, the theme of discipleship is a means of describing the process of becoming more engaged with worship. Worship is part of a pilgrimage or discipleship journey for all those who take part. In the Church of England becoming, belonging and believing are terms that have been used to describe this pilgrimage journey of discipleship (Liturgical Commission, 2007).

Second, the theme of power raises questions of where power lies in worship? Whom is worship for? And how worship may both empower and disempower. For children and those new to worship (but not exclusively so) the theme of power is especially relevant.

Third, the Eucharist itself; its liturgy and liturgical practice is important to the worshipping life of St O and St E as an expression of theology in practice. In this sense eucharist becomes a key theme for this study. Furthermore, the themes of discipleship, power and eucharist drawn from the theoretical perspectives become foundational concepts for an integrated conceptual framework for the research methodology. The Bishop of Derby and the Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) of my two churches were supportive of the research proposal, keen to see its results inform

practice and for the experiences of co-curating the Eucharist shared in the diocese and wider church.

Structure of the thesis

Part 1 is concerned with the contexts and rationale for the research enquiry. I present the research statement, a personal reflection of my research journey and research contexts developed from the concerns I have established from reflexive practice. A contextual framework illustrates the relationship between the research and the concerns and motivations by which I am driven.

Part 2 is concerned with the theoretical perspectives derived from literature and the development of an integrated conceptual framework. I examine four theoretical perspectives: a pilgrim model of church; co-curation; an experiential understanding of education; and children's spirituality as relational. From this survey of the literature the themes of discipleship, power and eucharist are identified and named as conceptual themes for research.

Part 3 explains the use of the conceptual framework to design an inductive research approach. I present a rationale for working within an inductive and practical theological research paradigm as an insider researcher to discover the importance of children in the Eucharist to different people. Second, I present a rationale for using living theory as an interpretation of Participatory Action Research (PAR). The use of PAR is justified with a brief detailed account of the main schools of thought on Action Research and its living theory off-shoots. I explain how the research design enabled me to collect appropriate data to answer the research question: is co-curating the Eucharist with children important to the spiritual flourishing of the church? I describe how I planned and handled the sequence of PAR cycles and evaluated the outcomes of each cycle.

A descriptive and factual account is presented of the recruiting of three researcher groups for each church. I describe the data-gathering process and its relationship to the research issue of the place of children in the worship. I describe the approach to analysis and justify the decision to adopt a constant comparative method of analysis using NVivo, a software analysis package to identify and code each unit of data as it related to the primary themes of discipleship, power and eucharist.

In Part 4 I present a qualitative analysis of the data to show what the researcher groups said in response to the four starter questions of: importance, feelings, involvement and closeness to God in the Eucharist without and with co-curation with children. I give an interpretive and evidenced-based account of the data gathered through PAR and draw upon my reflexive journal to present a thematic analysis of what I have learnt from research about the relationship between co-curating the Eucharist with children and discipleship, power and eucharist. The final chapter in this section explores the discovery, derived from the data, of attentive presence as a unifying concept that will make a valuable contribution to further research.

In Part 5 I present two sets of conclusions. Chapter 13 focusses upon the distinctive methodological contribution this research makes to congregation studies in the Church of England and provides a critique of aspects of the methodology. Chapter 14 focusses upon the contribution of this research to knowledge and practice by showing how I have answered the question of the importance of co-curation to the spiritual flourishing of the church. I will make and justify the claim that this research is potentially of real benefit to my churches and the wider church.

Chapter 1 Contexts

I was ordained deacon in the Church of England in 2012 following two years of training in theology and ministry. In this chapter I outline the research contexts that began during my curacy in four Cambridgeshire commuter villages and continue in my present work as a parish priest in Derby. This will show where and how my concerns about the place of children and the Eucharist began. The importance of my concerns is established through a review of the place of children in these churches and extracts from my reflexive journals.

1.1 A contextual framework

Developing a contextual framework has enabled me to ask questions about my theological assumptions (fig.1). The framework of the roles of priest, teacher and mother that inform my spirituality, ministry and practice share the central issues of justice, discovery and experience at the theological heart of this enquiry. Further, the contextual framework provides the focus for my reflexive journaling.

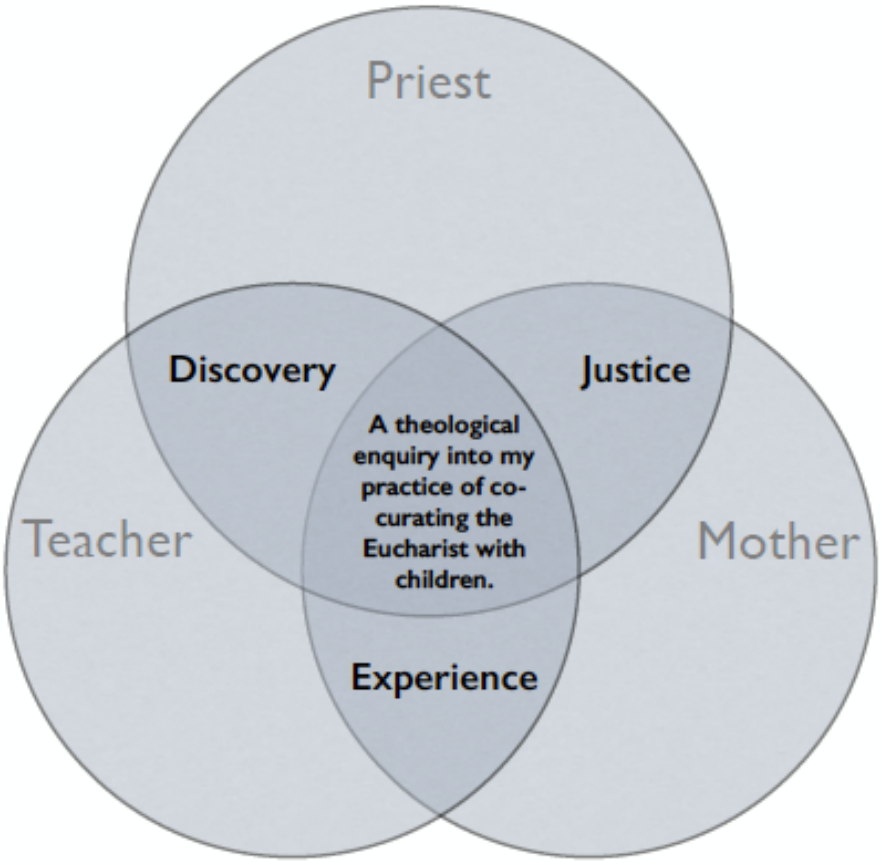

Figure 1.1 The researcher's contextual framework

The contextual framework illustrates my reasons for choosing to study for a Professional Doctorate. My professional practice is inextricably linked with the motivations that steer that practice. The professional doctoral journey leading to this thesis has enabled me through successive papers to do several things. I have discovered a gap in knowledge and arrived at a research question. I have built up a body of knowledge from others in the field and discovered the research methodologies most suited to offering something new to the corpus of knowledge about children and the Eucharist. In Chapters 2-7 I draw upon the fruits of that earlier work to present the key theoretical perspectives and conceptual framework underpinning this research.

1.2 My reflexive practice

Reflexive knowing describes the deliberate attention researchers give to their own understanding of the world with the purpose of saying something new about it (Swinton and Mowat 2006, p.34). This thesis is concerned with the world of two worshipping communities and the backgrounds and experiences I bring to that world. Swinton and Mowat see reflexivity as a natural part of the researcher's role, where researcher and participant are essential to each other as co-creators of the narrative that emerges from the research. Two types of reflexivity are identified from practical theology that are fundamental to my practical research in parish ministry. First, a personal reflexivity where being a mother and a former teacher, with a spirituality informed by the Christian Community of Taizé and a calling to the priesthood are part of an ongoing story: 'that all research is, to an extent, autobiography' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.60). Second, an epistemological reflexivity where my own story is a part of the developing story and 'involved with the research process, not as a distant observer, but an active participant and co-creator of the interpretive experience (p.35).

Keeping a journal has been fundamental to my reflexive practice. It has allowed my voice **and** the voices of children to be heard. It is a research approach that acknowledges I am part of the setting: 'an approach that favours the experiential as evidence, the affective and imaginative as thought processes, and story as an important form of expression' (Dixon, 2012, p.59). I have seen that a *wondering* process has allowed for 'a conversation between equals' to develop where the

interviewer adopts a key listening role to enable the story to emerge (Etherington, 2004, p.39).

Through journaling I have been able to reflect upon not just my own position as both an insider parish priest but also as an outsider practical theologian (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.166). I have been flexible in using more than one qualitative research method to best meet the needs of my contexts and experiences. This is an important means of validating the research. The practical theological approach is also pragmatic in acknowledging mine is a piece of real-world research undertaken in my place of work. Robson states: 'pragmatists believe that values play a large role in conducting research and in drawing conclusions from studies' (2011, p. 29). A pragmatic approach is seen to be realist : 'virtually all real world research takes place in the "field", rather than in laboratory, situations' (p. 30).

I began making journal entries at the beginning of this doctoral research journey in 2013. First, in a word-processed document and referred to in the thesis as Journal 1.[1] Along the way I have found a notebook more user-friendly and as a consequence the entries became messier, but more reflective, more spiritual and included my prayers for this work.[2] This notebook is referred to as Journal 2. The entries began whilst on a pilgrimage to the Taizé community in Burgundy, France, shortly before the fieldwork was due to begin. I noted my anxieties about the recruitment of co-researchers and whether the planned gathering of data would work. They show my feelings about the presence of children in the worship in Taizé, and reflections on the research process itself where entries at each point of the fieldwork move from anxiety to relief to joy.

The voices of children may be discerned, not just in word but in action and in relationship, as is shown in the description of feelings of joy with a child beside me at the altar for the first time. Then, in equal measure, the feelings of desolation when told by a children's ministry leader that this child had no business to be in church but should have been sent to the Sunday School (Morris, Journal 1, 2014, p.1). The two city parishes where I minister now, though very different from the village church described in my journal, shared similar challenges for me as their parish priest. Both

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[1] An example from my word-processed journal is shown as Appendix 4

[2] An example from my notebook journal is shown as Appendix 5

appeared to be welcoming to children but children played no part in the curatorial of worship.

In the field of education, research into children's spirituality and finding ways to enable children to talk about their experiences, is well established, for example in Hay and Nye 2006, Lovelock and Adams 2017. Now as a parish priest myself, mother of four children of my own and with 20 years' experience as a secondary school teacher behind me, I have conducted some real-world research in a parish church context to discover whether, when children are involved and engaged in curating worship with adults, their presence and actions contribute to the spiritual flourishing of the church.

1.3 Taizé spirituality

My formation as mother, teacher and priest is rooted in first-hand experiences of the church and worship in Taizé: an ecumenical monastic community in France. Central to the spirituality of Taizé is communion and inclusion. Children are invited, not just as fellow pilgrims, but as guests of honour to sit with the prior of the community in the very centre of the church. Taizé's spirituality is based on pilgrimage; it is what governs the community's faith, understanding of scripture and its hospitality. The curation of the sacred space with its sails and fishing baskets is an icon of the process of journeying.

In welcoming children as fellow pilgrims the community expresses the kingdom values expressed in the gospels. For children to participate at the centre of liturgical worship in the 'most important' place is unusual in the C of E. The received opinion is that children will be bored. The faces and attitudes of the child participants in Taizé contradict this view. There is also a deeper spiritual dimension to the presence of children at the heart of worship alongside adults. Brother Roger, the founder and first Prior of Taizé states:

> All the children close to me each day! If they only knew how much their waiting for Christ supports our own! July 26, 1970.
> Fidanzio, 2010, p.96

Brother Roger sees the presence of children spiritually benefitting the worship of everyone. I contend that being moved by the witness of children is an example of spiritual flourishing. Brother Roger's theological perspective is in many ways anti-

theological in the sense that theologians can over-complicate simple basic truths and in doing so appear exclusive: ‘For Brother Roger, it was essential to emphasise that the trusting of faith was accessible to all — “even a child can manage it,” he said’ (Taizé, 2016, p.14). The presence of children sitting with the brothers of the community has become a sign that all are welcome without exception.

1.4 Ordained ministry in the Church of England

In the C of E only an ordained priest can preside at the Eucharist. The Eucharist is an act of worship where Holy Communion is celebrated. People speak of receiving communion: that is, the sharing of bread and wine that has been consecrated or made holy. Sometimes this service is known as the Mass or Lord's Supper. The president (the one who presides) uses a special prayer over bread and wine authorised by the Church of England for that purpose.

According to Canon Law it is still the requirement of a parish church in the Church of England to have a service involving Holy Communion every Sunday, either as the principal service of the day (the time when it is expected that most of the worshipping community will gather together) or at another time of day if for that Sunday the intention is that the principal service should not include Holy Communion.[3] Occasionally, where groups of churches share one priest it is not possible for every church to have a service of Holy Communion every Sunday. In these cases it is hoped that people will travel to receive communion in one of the other churches of the group.

I served my curacy in a United Benefice of four churches. During my first year it was interesting to observe the worshipping habits of each church community, and in particular, their approach to the inclusion of children. At one church there were no regular families with children who attended the monthly Eucharist. There was no separate provision for children's ministry. Once a month families did attend a designated Family Service but this did not include Holy Communion.

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[3]B 14 Of Holy Communion in parish churches: 1. The Holy Communion shall be celebrated in every parish church at least on all Sundays and principal Feast Days, and on Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday.… 2. The celebration of the Holy Communion in any parish church as required by this Canon may only be dispensed with in accordance with the provisions of Canon B 14A. (Church of England, 1983)

The second small village congregation did have families who attended the monthly Eucharist as well as the monthly Family Service. At the Eucharist an area of the church was used for the children with two leaders who helped them explore the theme of the service. They joined the rest of the congregation to gather round the altar table where they received a blessing. It was not usual at this church for children to receive communion until they had been confirmed (in the C of E this usually happens from the age of eleven).

The two larger village churches had a Eucharist three Sundays out of four. At one church a Junior Church met in an area of the church. The children began the service with their families, then left together with their leaders and rejoined the congregation to gather round the altar. Some children received communion and others a blessing depending upon the wishes of their parents.

At the fourth church a Sunday School met in the village hall at the same time as the service in church. No families or parents of Sunday School children attended the Eucharist. The Sunday School did not meet one Sunday a month so that the children and their parents could come to church instead for a Family Service. This did not include communion. Attendance by families at this service was surprisingly poor. The short service involved little liturgical action and primarily consisted of words in the form of a reading, a talk and prayers interspersed with hymns. The received thinking was that this form of service would be especially attractive to families with children. When I began to preside at the Eucharist for the first time it was at this church that I felt a great sense of loss and the denial of my theologies and practice (Appendix 1).

The different ways these four churches involved children in the worshipping community is indicative of differences across the C of E. A year later I moved to take up a post as parish priest of two churches in the city of Derby: St Andrew with St Osmund Derby and St Edmund Allenton and Shelton Lock. In the rest of the thesis these are referred to as St O and St E. The Eucharist is central to the liturgical tradition of these churches but expressed in different ways. St O is a church in the anglo-catholic tradition. The use of incense and bells to signify key parts of the liturgy is normal. Over the years the style of worship has attracted people from other parts of Derby. The congregation demographic is mainly elderly. There is no Sunday School or special provision for children but a play area in the church with toys has

been set aside. It has always been assumed that children are welcome to attend services but the service pattern or liturgy is curated by adults for adults.

St E is an urban and suburban parish in the south of the city. Unlike St O most of those recorded on the electoral roll live within the parish. Incense is used only at Christmas and Easter. There are several children who attend, either with parents or grandparents. On three Sundays a month there is a Junior Church. The leaders and children are present for the beginning of the service, leave for their own activities and return at the point of Holy Communion. One Sunday a month is designated as an 'All Age Eucharist' and the children stay in for the whole service. This follows the same liturgical pattern as the other Sundays but a PowerPoint and screen are used in the place of books, a nave altar rather than the high altar is also used, there is one reading rather than two and the sermon is replaced with a more interactive time of reflection upon the theme of the Sunday. Like the other Sundays the liturgical style can still be described as broadly middle-of-the-road where the priest wears a style of robe called a chasuble and liturgical actions and colours are used.

1.5 The start of my co-curating journey

My ordination as priest gave me a commission to preside at the Eucharist on behalf of the people. My theological stance is that the Eucharist, more than any other act of worship, is an expression of the Kingdom of God where all are welcome. It is an exclusive practice when children come to church but are not included in the Eucharist. It is also an exclusive practice when children are allowed to be present but not included as full members of the worshipping community. The issue is one of inclusion and communion.

I first experienced what I now describe as co-curating the Eucharist with children by accident. First with Amy, a nine-year-old, and the only child in a congregation of largely elderly people. In impulsively inviting her to join me at the altar for the Preparation of the Table and the Eucharistic Prayer I did not expect to experience the spiritual importance of her presence next to me. Her unexpected mirroring of my liturgical actions leant power and credibility to my presidency. By this I mean that my own experience as celebrant was deepened by the presence of a child alongside me. The child both affirmed me and confirmed Jesus's teaching of the importance of the presence of children at the centre of the community.

Then with Luke, a shy and reserved little boy of three. It was another church, and a different congregation used to the presence of children. On this day it was Luke's baptism so the congregation was swollen by his family, most of whom were new to church. Luke had been very prepared by his Mum who had even asked for the hymns beforehand so Luke would be familiar with them. After the distribution of communion, at the first notes of the final hymn, Luke suddenly leapt off his Mum's knee and began to dance in front of the altar where we had just shared communion. It was not a performance as Luke seemed totally unaware of the rest of us. He was completely caught up in his dance of joy. The hymn was called: 'The Spirit lives to set us free'. It seemed unnecessary, even intrusive, for me to give the Blessing that followed. We had all been blessed by Luke's dance. Some of his family spoke of seeing God in Luke. They were not believers but through Luke's dance they had a glimpse of the numinous.

From these experiences my research enquiry into co-curating the Eucharist was born. The spiritual experiences of children and their agency in deepening the spiritual experiences of adults in worship has not before been the subject of empirical research in the C of E.

1.6 Children and the Church of England context

One view recently researched in the field of practical theology is the concept of the specialness of children in the Christian community (Dixon, 2012). Another is a very useful paper from a Roman Catholic perspective where the author, and 'child-centered researcher' describes an ethnographic study of children attending catechesis classes (Ridgely, 2017, p.140). A third is a recently commissioned piece of research by the C of E Education Office, the results of which are published as: *Rooted in the Church Summary Report* (2017). I will draw upon some of the findings from this enquiry in the theoretical perspectives chapter.

In these studies either it is not the voices of children themselves that is of primary importance to the research or, in the case of the C of E research, the voices of parents and older young people were sought but not children under the age of eleven. The purpose of my enquiry however, is to tread new ground in the field of practical theological research by letting the voices of children as co-researchers be heard. In Chapter 3 I cite a chronology of reports produced by the British Council of Churches

that focus upon the children and church. The Church of England has learnt from the findings of these reports and produced others in consequence. A key Church of England report for this enquiry is *Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation* (Liturgical Commission, 2007, 6.9.2).

The report is important to this research for three reasons. First, because, coming from within the C of E, it makes a case for children and adults worshipping together: 'When children are included in the worshipping community, their active participation in the assembly enriches the experience of the whole congregation (cf. Matthew 18.1-5)' (2007, 6.9.2). The report makes clear that worship with children means receiving the ministry of children in intergenerational worship. Worship is a personal response to God but is also seen as a corporate act or enterprise. This is reflected in the research methodology where co-researchers worked in groups to share their individual experiences and to gather them as a collective experience. I have drawn on many specialists in the nurturing of children in the Christian faith (Ng, 1978; Willimon, 1979; Bunge, 2001; Weil, 2002; Wells, 2004; Mercer, 2005; Beckwith, 2010; Perham, 2010; Westerhoff, 2012; Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin, 2014) who have written about the importance of intergenerational worship to the discipleship of children.

Second, the report makes unsupported statements: that children 'suffer significant deprivation' if they do not experience intergenerational worship; that children learn the language of worship more easily than adults; that children in worship enrich 'the experience of the whole congregation' (2007, 6.9.2). These statements are explored in Chapter 3.

The third reason this report is important is because it makes statements about children but the voices of children are not included. My research offers empirical evidence of the experiences of children in intergenerational eucharistic worship. By hearing the voices of children as well as adults I am filling the gap in evidence that worship is important to the formation or discipleship of children, that children contribute to worship, that children enrich the experiences of everyone.

1.7 Preparing St O and St E for a worship research project

When I arrived at St O and St E I offered a Transforming Worship course, open to anyone from either congregation to attend. The course ran for seven weeks. Twenty

adults from both churches attended each session. The course was adapted from 'Worship Changes Lives': a resource written by members of the Church of England Liturgical Commission as part of a 'Transforming Worship' initiative. The course was concerned with how the experience of being part of worship and meeting God in worship can transform us (Moger and Bradshaw, 2008, p.3). It was an ideal means of generating interest in worship and exploring with my new congregations a pilgrimage model for discipleship that would lead into a discussion of children, the Eucharist and the concept of co-curation. The course was enthusiastically received and effectively paved the way for an introduction to the research enquiry.

A key teaching of the course was discipleship as a pilgrimage. The course enabled those who took part to discuss new ways of thinking about children and the Eucharist but I do not think it predisposed the participants to ways of thinking about discipleship. Of the 20 who took part five became co-researchers, three in the St E congregation group and two in the St O congregation group. Their participation in the research was very different to that of the course. The course was knowledge-based about forms of discipleship whereas the research was about the gathering of personal experiences of worship. Bradshaw's pilgrim model of discipleship as belonging, becoming and believing (2008, p.3) was employed in the research methodology.

Conclusion

In this first chapter I have set out the backgrounds and contexts drawn from personal experiences as a mother, teacher and priest in the Church of England. I have shown that reflexive journaling is important to my awareness of self as a practical theologian and researcher. I have also shown that inclusion and communion are central to the practice of my priesthood. The next chapter focusses upon the purposes of the research.

Chapter 2 Research concerns, questions and theologies

The purpose of this chapter is to establish why new knowledge is needed. It sets out the concerns, questions and theologies central to an enquiry into co-curating the Eucharist with children. As I have not discovered relevant research from the field of theology about the spiritual experiences of children this thesis draws upon practitioners in the fields of education and psychology (Hay and Nye, 1998; Adams, 2009; Nye, 2009; Reynaert, 2014; Adams and Green, 2015; Nye, 2015; Adams, 2017). These issues were first explored in Paper 1 and Paper 2 of my doctoral studies and a published paper (Appendices 1 and 2; Morris, 2016).

Further, it is largely in the field of children's spirituality in education where empirical research using the voices of children has become normal. One recent study for example, has gathered the experiences of children after visits to sacred places (Lovelock and Adams, 2017). Comparing these examples of research using the voices of children to my methodology has informed a richer understanding of children as co-researchers.

2.1 Research statement

This thesis is concerned with the value of the ministry of children in eucharistic worship to the spiritual flourishing of the church. It is a means to systematically find ways of realising the value of the ministry of children in my practice and in the practice of the churches I serve. I establish this value within the context of a Christian virtue ethics that sees children at the centre of the worshipping community as a living theory of practice. The research is set within explicit boundaries that are important to my practice.

2.2 Research purposes

The research purpose has been to discover whether the presence of children at the centre of the Eucharist helping to make worship happen can contribute to spiritual flourishing. In using the living theory model espoused by Whitehead and McNiff (2006) and Participatory Action Research (PAR) I show the struggle of realising my values of inclusion and communion and the transformative process of the establishment of truth based upon empirical evidence.

This research is **not** concerned with seeking ways of making worship, particularly the Eucharist, more accessible to children. There is a plethora of experts in the church working in the fields of liturgy, children's ministry and children's spirituality who are concerned with engaging children in intergenerational worship (see Kuhrt, 2009; Reiss, 2015). There is a wealth of material, advice and 'how-to' guides easily accessible online and in print for those in the practice of ministry with children and in worship creation. Reverend Ally's liturgy boxes for example, filled with liturgical symbols in miniature form, are designed for children to open and play with during the Eucharist. The children begin to relate their play to the big symbols of the liturgy as it unfolds (Barrett, 2017). This research is not concerned, therefore, with researching alternative forms of liturgy for when children are present, or the provision of alternative activities. In summary, it is not about what adults give to, or provide for, children, nor in making worship 'bite-sized' or 'busy' for children.

It **is** concerned with the experiences of adults and children being together in worship and making worship happen together. It is concerned with liturgical worship expressed in the Eucharist. It is concerned with the spiritual importance of the presence of children to the rest of the worshipping community. It is concerned with issues of inclusion and communion.

2.3 A gap in knowledge

My concerns and questions are about the place of children as members of two worshipping communities where the principal Sunday service in each includes the Eucharist. I am proposing a gap in knowledge about children and the Eucharist. The gap can be evidenced in three ways. First, it can be evidenced through my own experience as a parish priest, practical theologian and insider researcher, second, through a review of literature and academic research in the field and third, through an analysis of data gathered in fieldwork with child and adult co-researchers from within and outside my congregations. All these aspects of the research enquiry are established within clearly defined boundaries.

The first boundary to establish a gap in knowledge is concerned with the context of my professional practice, that is, the two Church of England parishes in Derby where I am the priest. The research conclusions can only be drawn from within this context. The second boundary is the Eucharist as the principal Sunday

service. In both my churches this is already the situation. The research conclusions are set against the Eucharist as it is practised at St O and St E.

This leads to the third boundary: the Eucharist where children are not part of the curatorial of worship. At the outset of the research enquiry St O and St E had not experienced the Eucharist co-curated with children. The fourth boundary is the introduction of children as active participants to co-curate the Eucharist. It would have been possible to invite adults who have never helped make worship happen to co-curate. However, this research is not concerned with the impact of new adults at the centre of the Eucharist, but children. It is children I contend, who are rarely a presence at the centre of the Eucharist helping to make worship happen.

My values as priest and practical theologian provide the fifth boundary. These are integral to the thesis. The next section explores these values in an outline of the research contexts.

2.4 Theology in practice

Practical theology is what shapes my ministry. Within the academy, the 18th Century theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher is widely known as the initiator and pioneer of the discipline, by introducing the subject to his university faculty (Bennett, 2017, p. 34). Bennett identifies three contributions Schleiermacher gives to practical theology: first, in setting out the practices of interpretation. Second, in exploring the connections between faith and cultural experience. These have opened up new ways of understanding which show that non-religious disciplines 'are potentially disclosive of fundamental and theological truth' (2017, p.35). Third, by establishing a place for practical theology within the theological canon, Schleiermacher affirms and makes explicit the relationship between theory and practice.

Bennett sets Schleiermacher's contribution alongside that of Barth's very different theological tradition, where, deep-seated in him is a belief that revelation can only come from God, therefore, divine revelation through human experience is regarded with suspicion. One of the conclusions in exploring the tensions between interpretation arrived at through cultural experience and interpretation through direct experience of God, is that, 'All our experience comes to us within an interpretative framework' (2017, p.51). My approach, through an interpretive framework of

reflexive journaling, is to pay attention theologically to what is happening in my ministry.

The growth of practical theology since the mid-twentieth century runs parallel with the birth of liberation theology in the 1960s. More recently, political theology is also a welcome expansion of how theology is practised. However, a key difference between other theologies and Practical Theology can be seen in its willingness to draw upon other academic fields such as psychology, sociology and education to see people as valid theological subjects for academic research alongside the traditional study of biblical texts (Miller-McLemore, 2014, p.1). However, the argument is also made that pastoral practice has always been at the root of the development of Christian theology and doctrine but unacknowledged. This is seen particularly in recent decades as the discipline has evolved, contesting a view that: 'people of faith outside the academy do not practice or produce theology and that theological claims and activities have little to do with public life' (2014, p.4).

One criticism of the development of Practical Theology as a discipline is that it is falling into the trap of a traditional awards system to validate an individual's piece of research. Stoddart states: 'Too much focus on this dimension of professionalization will be at the cost of realizing the potential of informal projects.' The danger is that Practical Theology is leaving behind its primary purpose of enabling and supporting research projects 'that need be no less rigorous, but be different in being truly interdisciplinary, *drawing on the expertise of people already in the pews'* (2014, p.81). My research, undertaken as a student within the regulations of a Professional Doctorate programme of study, directly addresses these issues.

In comparison to many pieces of research in the field of qualitative research this is a small scale, local study. Yet its design carries all the rigour and depth of larger-scale studies. In addition, I am an insider researcher and subject too of this research. I am a classic example of a person of faith in pastoral practice who began the research journey with a desire to work out a vision for the inclusion of children in the Eucharist with the churches where I work. Moreover, my research design **is** interdisciplinary, in relying upon, and *drawing on* the expertise of those in my worshipping and local communities by validating their experiences and providing opportunities to voice them, with the purpose of changing practice.

2.5 Liberation theology and being church

The contextual framework for this research (Chapter 1, p.7) shows that themes of discovery, justice and experience are important to my practice as a parish priest: an inclusive practice where all are welcome to take part in the Eucharist. This way of being church is born out of a theology of liberation. The vision is that St O and St E may become worshipping communities inclusive of all but especially opting for children. These verses from the Gospel of St Mark are a parable or visible sign of Jesus's teaching:

> Let the little children come to me; do not stop them. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.
> The Bible, Mark. 10:14-15

The verses are central to my moral compass and the practice of them came long before embarking on academic research. Theological interpretations are many but it has come as no surprise to me just how often I have come across the two verses. Political and pastoral theologians quote them in relation to how all human beings should behave towards one another. Some might argue the verses have become a cliche. I take the view that these two small verses, easily quotable by those even with only a passing knowledge of the Bible, may have become a cliche in the Christian tradition. But this makes an even stronger case for recovering the radical teaching of Christ they contain. I am a practical theologian and my focus therefore is on how these verses are worked out in my priestly ministry.

According to Boff the institutional church needs to rethink traditional models of church and enter into a new ecclesiology of the poor not for the poor. The church is simply 'People of God' and should be known and recognised by that term (1985, p. 155). It is clear in Matthew's Gospel that Jesus is to be found amongst the poor. It follows that, because Jesus is the church that the church is the poor and marginalised. The church is the presence of the resurrected Christ and the church. Boff argues that a new ecclesiology recognises the charisms or gifts of God are given to everyone without exception.

> It is a fundamental concept that there is a basic equality in the Church: according to Matthew (23:8) we are all brothers (and sisters), we are all children, we are all immersed in the risen Christ and anointed in the Holy Spirit.
> 1985, p.155

The argument made is for the recognition of a new ecclesial democracy where power is derived from the Holy Spirit made visible by a "plurality of gifts" and held equally by all those in the worshipping community (1985, p. 156).

2.5.1 Inherited models of church

Boff describes four inherited models of church. First, 'The Church as City of God' is a practice of church 'exclusively turned in on itself' (1985, pp. 2-3). Second, 'The Church as Mater et Magistra', is a colonial model where the concentration of power lies in the hierarchy of the church and whose mission is to be for the poor rather than with the poor (pp. 4-5). Third, 'The Church as Sacrament of Salvation' is where the church has become reformist in situating itself among those in secular society who wanted to transform the world. The problem with this ecclesiology is that reform is based upon 'dominant sectors in society' whose focus is upon 'advanced technological capitalism' and where 'the relationship with the poor will thus be defined from the perspective of the rich.' The church will call upon the rich to espouse the cause of the poor but not to change endemic unjust social practices (pp. 5-7).

These inherited models can be described as adult-centric. This thesis translates the poor of Boff's analysis to children who may already be part of the worshipping community but are the 'poor' of that community. Children are the 'poor' who in the first model are excluded from the practices of the church. In the second model children are at the bottom of a hierarchy that makes decisions for them. In the third model the relationship with children is defined by traditional and dominant forms of ministry with children that are endemic in the church. The power exercised is one of adults knowing best what children need. As a parent and teacher I recognise this power. It is born out of a desire to want what is best for your children. Children must be kept interested and engaged. In church, particularly for parents, there is the fear of their children disturbing the worship of the adults. The fear is not without justification as adults are quick to frown or make a comment at intrusive noise disrupting their experience. Worship leaders recognise this and plan services especially for children and families. There are many published materials to help with the curation of 'family style services'. The emphasis is on providing a shorter and

simpler service than the Eucharist might be. There may be lots for the children to do in these services. The congregation may become observers of the children rather than active participants themselves. These seem to suggest a child-centric approach, however the power still resides within an 'adult knows best' understanding of what children need.

In the light of the development of non-eucharistic family services, the Eucharist over time has come to be seen in contrast or even in conflict with other forms of worship. If family services are seen to be suitable services for children to be welcomed then the Eucharist is not. A liturgically rich eucharistic service is usually described in 'traditional' or 'formal' terms. A study of church notice boards quickly reveals this language of contrast where the welcome offered to different ages of people is on the basis of a perceived attraction. The message promoted is that the Eucharist will not attract young people and families.

In an adult-centric approach the formation of disciples is seen to be an adult activity, either adults teaching other adults or teaching children. For example, adults decide when children are ready to receive teaching about the Eucharist. In the Church of England this may be determined arbitrarily by age. For some churches children are deemed old enough at the age of seven or eight, for others from at least the age of eleven. The reasons revolve around the need for children to understand what happens at Holy Communion before they receive it and that children should be confirmed before they receive.

2.5.2 A counter-cultural model for being church

In the new model Boff proposes the religious and political become one: 'A Church from the Poor.' This ecclesial model recognises that all those in the church community are involved in shaping the community but especially those whose voices have, in traditional models of church, been disregarded (1985, pp. 7-11). The ecclesial model underpinning this thesis draws upon Boff's liberation theology of church from the poor but takes the argument further, to propose a pilgrim model of church where all gifts or charisms are valued wherever individuals are situated in their journey of discipleship. This means becoming like the poor of the gospels, becoming like children or put this way: being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. In Chapter 3 I cite the Church of England's *Going for Growth* report which concludes

that churches are lacking in humility by not accepting children as they are (Archbishop's Council Education Division 2010). Jesus's call for his disciples to become like children is a call to humility. If taken seriously a dominant culture where power is held must change to welcome ministry by children. There is an ironic role reversal here where to become like children is to become silent like the least of all: 'A silent child is placed among the noisy disciples for ontological appreciation: it is the silent child who teaches' (Berryman, 2002, p.130).

In the Godly Play story presentation: *The Good Shepherd and World Communion* (Berryman, 2003, pp.91-98) people of all ages and cultures are brought to gather around the table of the Good Shepherd and to share in the bread and in the wine. The story concludes with the words: 'and even the children come.' This loaded phrase suggests the reality that in many churches the children are not welcome at this sacred moment. Yet many researchers and writers on the subject argue that eucharistic worship is where, above all, ministry by children should be taken seriously as an act of spiritual formation. For example, Beckwith states: 'children teach us about worship and help us to reframe our understanding of what is happening' (2010, p.98). We can draw from this argument that to receive the ministry of children is to receive their teaching.

2.6 A kingdom ethic

This thesis contends that a pilgrim model of church expressed as child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way is a means to realise the kingdom values of Christian teaching. A kingdom ethic or virtue is a way of being or being church that leads to spiritual flourishing. Stassen and Gushee (2003, p.32) describe virtues as 'qualities of a person that make that person a good person in community, and that contribute to the good of community, or to the good that humans are designed for.' Good in this sense is a spiritual concept.

One characteristic of the Kingdom of God Stassen and Gushee identify is God's presence, citing McClendon's 'virtue of presence' and Hauerwas's emphasis on the 'virtue of patience' or waiting upon God (2003, p.53). The focus of this research is two communities of worshippers. Each person's contribution to worship contributes to their own goodness, the goodness of the community of worshippers and ultimately to the flourishing of the church. Co-curation with children and young

people is a quest for understanding about the relationship with God and with each other through experiencing the curatorial of the Eucharist.

Jesus's teaching, particularly through the parables, is concerned with the kingdom he is bringing in. This kingdom is not a place but a way of being (Strange, 1996, p.46). As a sign of the kingdom then, co-curation has the potential to subvert hierarchies, deepen spiritual engagement and counter the dominant model.

Summary

In the first part of this thesis I have outlined my personal journey and the backgrounds, contexts and theologies for a research enquiry within the field of practical theology. I have established that empirical research about the inclusion of children in the Eucharist helping to make it happen is needed to address unsubstantiated statements about children and inclusion in a key church report from the Church of England (2007). I have shown my contexts and concerns for this enquiry in a clear summary as a contextual framework.

The research draws upon these contexts to offer something new to the corpus of knowledge about children and worship. Much has been researched and written about the importance of children's discipleship when part of intergenerational worshipping communities, but little of the ministry given by, or agency of, children. This research has been designed to give children a voice. It is also important to note that the study is a small enquiry, focused upon two churches where the Eucharist is the principal Sunday service. I have not attempted to enlist other churches in the Church of England or other denominations in research at this stage. Within the field of practical theological enquiry and through a distinctive methodology I have tried something out in my practice, explored and reflected upon its processes and prepared the ground for further research.

Introducing the practice of co-curating the Eucharist with children is born out of my convictions that there is an inherent injustice and abuse of power that goes against Jesus' teaching about what the kingdom of heaven is like that he wishes to see established on earth. If adults exclude children from the Eucharist or only allow them access on the terms of adults, then not only does this go against the teaching of Christ but it affects how the church leads by example in including all those marginalised in society. A living theory approach to a PAR method of research situates me as the

practitioner within the enquiry. The data sample includes my journal entries made before, during and after the fieldwork stage of the research.

In providing a summary of the structure of the thesis I have also shown the journey of the research enquiry, from contexts to concepts; from methodology to conclusions. My practical theological journey is first and foremost a pastoral enquiry borne out of personal experiences and spiritual practices in ministry and an ecclesiology that sees communion and inclusion at its heart.

Part 2 From Context to Concept

Introduction

Part 1 of the thesis has shown that through my context, experience, and values I question the dominant view and practice of how children are part of the Eucharist in the Church of England. In Part 2 I show how these contexts have informed my research of literature and conceptual framework. In Chapter 3 I examine four theoretical perspectives drawn from literature which offer an alternative mode of understanding and practice based upon a model of child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. From the theoretical perspectives I define key concepts of discipleship, power and eucharist. Chapter 4 explores these concepts to develop a framework from which I have designed an appropriate research methodology.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical perspectives which follow are set within a paradigm of inclusion in the Eucharist regardless of age. Each perspective addresses the issue of inclusion and communion in order to explore the importance of children to the spiritual flourishing of the church. I present four theoretical perspectives derived from literature that are set within this paradigm of inclusion: a pilgrim model of church; co-curation; an experiential understanding of education; and children's spirituality as relational.

At the heart of the Eucharist is the celebration of Holy Communion.[4] Symbolically Holy Communion describes being at one with each other and with God through the sharing of bread and wine. An examination of ministry in the church with children today is set within this context of the local church gathering in communion. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams states: 'Slowly the Church of England has been learning….that it is a community for all' (Lake, 2006, vii). Zizioulas, an Orthodox theologian, speaks from an ecumenical perspective in calling the Eastern and Western church to a way of 'being as communion' in a new 'authentic catholicity' (1985, p. 26). Like Williams, Zizioulas argues that the Eucharist is for all.

> This means that eucharistic assembly should include *all* the members of the Church in a particular place, with no distinction whatsoever with regard to ages, professions, sexes, races, languages, etc [italics in original].
> p. 247

The argument is that when all the community is present together in the Eucharist that communion is created as an authentic expression of being church.

From an Anglican theological perspective Wells argues that being with is 'an understanding of the most appropriate response of humankind to the action of God' (2015, p.15). Wells states that the church has become an institution that works for others and exists for others but the model Jesus gives us in the Gospels is *being with*. Being with means spending time with the poor, the marginalised and those outside the community (p.20). Being with others is more important than working or doing for them. I contend that much of the adult-child relationship in churches can be described as working for or being for children. My research challenges this dominant

[4] B14 of the Canons of the Church of England states: 'The Holy Communion shall be celebrated in every parish church at least on all Sundays' (Church of England. 1983. Code of Canon Law).

adult-child relationship and seek to discover whether, adults and children being together in worship enables relationships to grow and flourish, with each other and with God.

3.1 A pilgrim model of church

The first theoretical perspective is concerned with a pilgrim model of being church. Its roots can be found in the work done during the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1960s. Citing Paul's Letter to the Romans, Pope Paul VI describes the church as 'the pilgrim Church' journeying towards 'new heavens and a new earth in which justice dwells' (1964, p.55). A pilgrim model focuses upon the importance of adults and children journeying together in a spirit of generosity learning from each other.

Though concerned with developing this practice in the Church of England I draw upon the rich legacy of the wider church by considering a series of reports published by the British Council of Churches Consultative Group on Ministry among Children during the 1970s and 1990s.[5] The British Council of Churches states: 'We are one band of pilgrims. We are old and young, women and men, black and white, lay and ordained' (Swanwick Declaration, 1987). One report of the council: *Unfinished Business (BCCCG, 1991)* presents a model of church it calls 'The Church as a Child'. This model is an important contributor to a pilgrim model of church but I will argue for a more radical model of the pilgrim church as the child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. This is a practical outworking of a pilgrim church where, not only are all included and equally valued but the practice of these values is built upon child like characteristics of trust and playfulness.

3.1.1 A chronology of Church of England development

In 1976 a preliminary report: *The Child in the Church* was published. This was updated and coupled with a second report to become *The Child in the Church: Understanding Christian Nurture,* published by the British Council of Churches, an ecumenical body, which included the Church of England. A key recommendation was that children are nurtured best in a church environment where the adults question

[5] The British Council of Churches was formed in 1942 with 16 member denominations and is now known as Churches Together in Britain and Ireland.

traditional norms and are capable and happy to 'respond to new situations with novel actions' (1984, p.43).

A seminal report: *Children in the Way* followed in 1988. This report concluded that the operant Sunday School model was no longer fit for the purpose of expressing children as full members of the church by their baptism and fellow pilgrims on the journey with the rest of the people of God (BCCCGM, 1988). The report presented two inherited models of nurturing children in the faith. The first is the school model (the model clung to at my former parish described in Chapter 1). The tradition of a separate Sunday School is still the desired model for many parish churches. This is very understandable as it was the means of discipleship for many older members of our congregations. The school model relies upon the tradition of age-related learning, mirroring the organisation of learning in the education system. The argument therefore is about tradition: if it worked for us when we were children then it should work today.

The second is the family model. In a family model of church those working directly with children adopt 'parent' roles. The parent-child relationship also extends to the whole worshipping community. The parent-child relationship can include adults who are seekers or new to the faith. The 'child' group in this relationship is treated specially and differently to the adult group (1988, pp.74-75). A family model of discipleship can perpetuate traditional roles. First, in an unequal relationship where adults know best and care is directed in a flow from adult to child. Second, that in church the nurture of children is largely undertaken by women.

Women feature as the primary nurturing adults in both models. The Church of England Sunday School of my childhood was led by women. The Sunday schools I have known since, including my previous parishes have been run by women. The Junior Church at St E is led by two women. However, Mercer's research (2005) amongst congregations in North America, concludes that the responsibility for the care of children is the work of the whole church, not just mothers and women. When Jesus places a child in the centre of the adult group it is to illustrate that adults need to become like children to be part of God's kingdom. Children have ways of being that adults have forgotten or rejected. In traditional school and family models adults do things for children. Mercer dreams of a utopian church where 'Its liturgical, missional, and community life represent[s] common struggle and celebration among

all - including children' where everything that happens there happens with and not for children (p.242).

In contrast to the school and family models of church the BCCCG report advises a third model for nurturing children in the faith. A pilgrim model sees all in the church community: adults and children, learning from 'shared experience and shared stories' (1988, p.34). The *Children in the Way* report points out that the Bible's more frequently used social construct is not the family but the wider community of Israel and of the church. The story of the Creator God's relationship with his people is expressed as a pilgrim people journeying with God. Much of the biblical writers' reflections upon a relationship with God suggest that it is at times of journeying when the people are closest to God; where trust in God's guidance and saving grace is key. The whole people of God without differentiation, are journeying together: 'Being the pilgrim people means that all are called to the journey, and all involved in the teaching and learning on the way' (pp.76-77). This report offers a way to research the importance of children, to the spiritual flourishing of the church. Adopting a pilgrim model means accepting that children are also called to journey as part of the whole body of Christ. When the whole worshipping community journeys together we learn from each other about what it means to be part of that body.

Support for a pilgrim model of church led to the specific issue of children receiving communion and the report *Children and Holy Communion was published* (BCCCGM, 1989). The British Council of Churches Consultative Group continued to press the argument for a fundamental shift in understanding of the place of children in our churches. However, the school and family models of children's ministry were still dominant and a final report in the series: *Unfinished Business* (BCCCG,1991) concluded that the progress of inclusion of children in worship with adults was mixed. The BCCCG continued to adhere to the central thrust of the argument made over three decades.

> It is not enough for the churches to be concerned about attracting children to worship or to the organisations they run…the churches today are called to take new risks and to change in attitude and activity towards and with children in a faithful response to God.
> (p.69).

Though making no direct reference to *Lumen Gentium* (1964), as with the previous reports in the series, the authors are drawing their inspiration from the

outcomes of Vatican II. For example, a spokesperson at the Second Vatican Council is cited with reference to liturgy not being about individual worship but where 'people pray together' and that, 'even watching must become seeing, looking with attention, because all the people are involved' (BCCCG, 1991, p.21). The report makes the case that children should be involved in liturgical practice: that congregations 'take seriously children's developing appreciation of symbol and ritual which are so central to their experience of play and fantasy' (p.21). This supports my contention that children should be part of the experience of worship, not excluded from it. The report concludes however, that adults are reluctant to make way for children in congregational life and particularly the Eucharist.

A pilgrim model however, is built upon justice and generosity by including everyone in a spirit of journeying together. In *Unfinished Business*, drawing upon scripture and tradition, six models or "images of the Church" (p.49) where God can be known by being church in a pilgrim way, are considered. The God known in 'the new creation' model is one who seeks a new created order built upon justice for all. 'The Body of Christ' model seeks to see God known in a community where no one is unimportant and everyone feels they belong. 'The spirit-filled community (koinonia)' model is where the congregation recognises that it is the Holy Spirit which draws together and empowers and where faith is lived out in the wider community. 'The pilgrim people' is a model expressing faith development as a journey with God and with each other. A pilgrim church is one that knows where it has come from but can move on in trust. It recognises that each person will be in a different place on the journey but does not stand still. 'The hospitable space' model draws upon the biblical imagery of God's generous hospitality at a feast. Church is therefore seen as a place where everyone is welcomed, everything shared and people feel fed and nurtured. It is recognised that all these models are important for the development of congregations "both by being challenging and by enabling people to express their own ideas" (p.49).

The sixth model is 'the child'. Features of the other models are all present. The Church as a child shares the ideals of a theology of liberation with its biblical foundation in the teaching of Jesus found in the two verses of Mark's Gospel: 'that being a child is not a choice of weakness or passivity but is a way of interacting with others and responding to the world…the Church as a child is dependent on God,

receiving grace and blessings as a gift and living in trust' (1991, p.60). Further, the report identifies a character of worship that the Church as a child might express: 'The worship of such a Church would be very imaginative and allow room for spontaneity' (p.61).

This thesis presents the argument that, to realise fully a pilgrim model of church, a further model is needed by turning the church as a child model on its head. Instead of seeing the church first and child second in becoming like a child what might be learnt from adopting a child as church model? This way of becoming a pilgrim people is to say that everything that is needed in a pilgrim model of church for discipleship and for spiritual growth, is found in what it is to be child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. Such a pilgrim model expressed as child as church needs a generosity of spirit on the part of the adult worshipping community, not only to include children, to learn to be with children and learn from them, but to grow to be like children.

3.1.2 The Church of England and leading worship

To be child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way directly relates to the way we worship. The pilgrim model requires rethinking the way worship is created and led. Alongside the reports relating to church and children, there have been developments in the Church of England relating to the way worship is conducted. The theological argument for a recovered understanding of priesthood as the ministry of every church member was made in what became known as 'The Tiller Report' (Tiller with Birchall, *The Gospel Community and its Leadership,* 1987). Drawing upon an investigation of churches across England Tiller states: 'the problem for the church is not its age, but its preoccupation with the religion of the sanctuary, its concern for its own preservation, and its subjection to a professional ministry' (1987, Preface). The report argues theologically for 'every member ministry' and its primary thesis is for the development of corporate leadership in the local church (p.129). Every member ministry is a key feature of the pilgrim model inspired by the Second Vatican Council (*Lumen Gentium*, 1964). Within the Tiller report the argument is made that the church must move from an 'extreme expression of a cultic view of Christianity' where the laity have no role. Tiller argues this is a

denial of the theology of a priesthood of all believers as it was practised in the early church.

In 1987 the argument for shared leadership in worship focussed upon the ordination of women, as 'Women already belong to the church's priesthood by virtue of their baptism' (1987, p.64). The ordination of women was finally realised in the Church of England in 1994. Until that point, and even until today, the subject of women in ministry is still one of liberation. In some parts of the Church of England the ordination of women is still not recognised and a cultic Christianity still survives where the laity as a whole has little in the way of leadership roles in worship.

In 2004 a fundamental step-change took place in the Church of England, which has introduced new ways of thinking about how we do church. The report *Mission-shaped Church* (2004) has driven thinking in the church about discipleship and new ways of being and doing church. The intention of the report was to present a picture and address the issues of society in post-modern Britain and its relationship with the decline in church attendance, particularly of the younger generations. It begins by describing a post-modern society where new forms of community are formed around networks that are fluid rather than long-lasting. The report rightly identifies a different model of family life today where other things have taken priority on Sundays. Attending church or sending children to Sunday School is no longer seen as a duty to fulfil. The report recommended that the church must change its worship practices to reflect a networked model of society: 'No one kind of worship can attract, much less hold, a major proportion of the varied population of this country' (2004, p.13). The question posed is: 'How can diversity and accessibility be sustained through one style of ministry and worship, in a single congregation or single church parish' (p.35). The report gives examples of where churches have divided Sunday worship into 'networks' of different age and interest groups (p.61).

The report's argument, however, works against a pilgrim model where all ages are journeying together. It is as though there is one road but with different like-minded groups on the road not interacting with each other. Or worse, there are parallel roads: a road for each network group.

Given the chronology, the 2007 report to which I am addressing my research (Chapter 1, p.16) suggests conflicting views today about intergenerational worship. *Mission-shaped Church* promotes a view that children and adults should experience

different age-bound forms of worship; that the Eucharist is a style of worship too formal to engage children. Whereas, *Transforming Worship: Living the New Creation,* promotes a pilgrim model where children and adults worshipping together in the Eucharist is seen as beneficial to adults and children, and by extension, to the whole church (Liturgical Commission, 2007). This dichotomy continues today.

3.1.3 Children's ministry today

The many church-commissioned reports cited in this chapter advocate a pilgrim model of being church. This thesis contends that child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way is a means to achieving a pilgrim model. However, children's ministry today continues to reinforce an adult-centred view of what children need, which runs counter to a pilgrim model or 'being with' as advocated by Wells (2015). The dominant approach is still that what is needed for ministry with children is provided by adults to meet that need and provided as a separate or network group from the rest of the worshipping community (*Mission-shaped Church* 2004).

The term 'children's ministry' is well-known in church circles. Churches offer a range of children's ministries. Godly Play is a storytelling programme that may happen at the same time as the main service on a Sunday or at a separate time of the week. Junior Church is a term to describe what might have been called Sunday School in the past. The term Sunday School is still used. At St E the Junior Church is called Explorers but church members, including the Junior Church leaders still refer to it as Sunday School. Additional ministries include holiday clubs and other nurturing groups. Messy Church is a programme for children and families. It is seen as a church in its own right, separate from the traditional worshipping community in the mode of fresh expressions of church advocated by *Mission-shaped Church* and heavily promoted in the Church of England. On diocesan websites Messy Church features prominently: (http://www.ely.anglican.org/mission/children/childrens_news.html, 2014).

In children's ministry in the Church of England today 'busy' learning or learning by doing has become the dominant model of ministry with young people. Its methodology is active learning, with business and fun its focus. The Messy Church logo includes a big 'splodge' of red paint to signify an approach of active messiness

as the primary mode of learning. The activities are prescribed, with little room for experiential learning. The subscription-based Messy Church magazines provide a set of thematic activities that the local Messy Church team prepares in advance for the session. For example, the prayer flag activity from the May 2017 edition gives a prescription that includes the type of crayons: "wax", a copying exercise: 'Copy one of the flags on to an A5 sheet and colour it in using the correct colours' and a prayer intention: 'On the back of your flag write a short prayer asking God to bless the Messy Churches in this country' (*Get Messy May-August* 2016, p.20). Activities such as this leave no room for self-expression.

What Messy Church does do is insist that children can only attend with their parents or carers. In this way the movement could be described as intergenerational and there is a worship element to each session. However, my research is focussed upon intergenerational worship in the principal worship of the parish church, not in the other areas of a worshipping community's life or in an expression of church apart from the main worshipping community. The loss of traditional family and extended family intergenerational structures in society has meant that there are many children growing up without the experience of mixing with adults and vice versa. If children and adults are not given opportunities to worship together this simply reinforces the fragmentation that the researchers for *Mission-Shaped Church* identified. Margaret Withers, when describing the decline of children attending parish churches over the past 60 years, responds to this report by stating that its failure was not to recognise the ministry of children. Children are mentioned in the report, but only as 'passive beings, or fish caught in nets' (2006, p.x). Withers states: 'The Church needs to go on affirming and resourcing the children that are at church on Sunday morning and see that they are in the midst of the gathered community' (2006, p.64).

The implication in the term 'children's ministry' is ministry to children. And yet, 'women's ministry' is also a well used term. It has largely been accepted that the ministry of women, ordained and lay, is valid and just. The church has never used the term women's ministry to mean ministry *to* women, but ministry *by* women. What would it mean therefore for the church to see children's ministry as ministry *by* children? Developing a child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way approach suggests that adults need to receive from children and learn from children. This is a real departure from an adult-centric approach to children's ministry where

children are excluded from being with as part of the whole community, but I believe is central to achieving a pilgrim model of church.

3.1.4 A baptismal ecclesiology

A theoretical perspective key to this thesis is the rediscovery of the baptismal ecclesiology of the early church where liturgy was seen to be the work of the whole congregation (Weil, 2002). A baptismal ecclesiology, therefore, supports a pilgrim model of being church. Weil argues that the Laos or laity includes children: 'children bring to the assembly qualities that adults have lost and need to recover, especially a sense of the immediacy of God' and that to receive the kingdom of heaven like a child 'is not a sentimental platitude but bedrock theology' (p.47). Children are described as 'naturally liturgical beings' (p.106) because they become involved with the whole of themselves as they have not yet learnt the repression of adults. Weil argues passionately for children to be seen by the church as 'agents for its transformation into an authentically inclusive model and one that embraces all ages and all stages of human development' (p.107). The argument is that, through what children bring to worship, we can all recover a way of being as a child, in playing; creating; entering; learning, and improvising that as adults we may have left behind.

Perham (2000, p.86) also makes the point that it is baptism that makes a person a full member of the church so everyone, children and adults, need to be involved in its liturgical practice. Perham speaks of the church's failure 'to find a formula that integrates all ages' and outlines four working principles important for this research enquiry:

1. Children 'belong to the liturgy...by virtue of their baptism, to the Church of today.'
2. Children 'belong at the altar, sharing the sacrament.'
3. Children need not be absent from the liturgy because of its demands in terms of wonder, awe and mystery: 'For they have these in greater measure than adults.'
4. Children need to 'both see the action and be part of it'

(pp.86-87)

St E and St O welcome children in the Eucharist. Children are invited to receive communion. Children are not excluded because it is thought they should not

be present. They are invited to be part of the liturgical action. Many other churches have the same inclusive views. These are characteristics of a pilgrim model of church. What is needed, are findings from empirical research, that include the voices of children about discovering their experiences of worship and how far those experiences may demonstrate a pilgrim model of child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way.

3.1.5 The Child as Church

At the heart of this thesis is an overarching theoretical perspective of inclusion and communion that sees a pilgrim model of discipleship, informed by a way of being as of child as church: a being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way, as the means to becoming a fully inclusive church and key to its spiritual flourishing. Child as church means not just including children but making way for children, prepared to learn from children and being surprised by children. The theoretical perspective of worship as overaccepting is important to this way of being with children (Wells, 2004).

The term overaccepting is used by Wells to describe generous, self-less action, not passive acceptance or selfish rejection in response to the presence of others who may unsettle the status quo. It is an active way of receiving that enables one to retain both identity and relevance. It is a way of accepting without losing the initiative. What it is easy to do as church is either simply accept the norms of the world and incorporate them into our way of doing things or turn our backs on or block things that don't seem to fit with our way. Wells argues that we need to do the harder thing which is to overaccept and by doing so develop a distinctive ethical model for the church today. In practice, to overaccept children in the Eucharist, means acting without self-interest and with generosity in making way for children to be present at the centre of worship. It means giving children the freedom to be themselves even though it will change the worship experience for adults who are used to a curation of eucharistic worship that holds few surprises. When children are present overaccepting means being prepared for the unexpected, being prepared to be surprised by worship.

Theologically, this preparedness to be surprised in a spirit of generosity, where those considered the least are welcomed as the greatest or most important, may be seen in Crossan's exegesis of Mark's Gospel (2012). The central question

discussed is about leadership of the church from its earliest days. Crossan suggests that Mark's vision is 'an exaltation of the nameless over the named' (p.175). The named leaders of the church come and go, leaving behind a not always creditable legacy because they did not exercise leadership in the way Jesus had taught them. When Jesus places the child in the middle of the disciples and the crowd, he does so because the child represents the nameless, the servant, the powerless. Those who are named, who have power, are no longer holding centre stage. Jesus presents us with a physical, visceral image of the kingdom of God.

Crossan's exegesis of the two verses is an example of Wells' overaccepting (2004) where those without power are brought into the centre of the worship of the church in a spirit of self-less generosity rather than grudging tolerance. The ongoing challenge for the church is to live out the radical nature of Jesus's teaching. It is much easier to be grudgingly accepting or merely tolerant. It is much harder to give away, to give generous space to the other. To welcome children at the centre of the Eucharist as co-curators is a practical outworking of Jesus' teaching.

To bring the debate about children and the church right up to date I conclude with the most recent report commissioned by the C of E: *Rooted in the Church.* The aim of the Church of England Education Department commissioned research by RBD (Research by Design) was to discover:

> What helps root young people in the worshipping life of the Church of England so that they continue to engage with the Church as a place of spiritual nurture and growth into their adult years?
> 2016, p.1

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of research were used including two surveys, one completed by young adults aged 16 to 30 and the second by parents of young people aged 11 to 30. The views of children were not sought. The purpose was to 'identify some of the key themes and challenges facing the Church with regard to youth rootedness and participation' (p. 4). The key findings from the voices heard is that church should be non-judgmental, welcoming and inclusive; that young people don't always want to be separated from the main body in age-related groups; that leading and serving roles in intergenerational worship are welcomed; and the linking of confirmation and communion creates an artificial divide between generations (2016, p.3).

There are also five conclusions important to the research

> Churches should aim to build a culture of intergenerational relationships.
>
> Churches should be inclusive of all ages in both leadership and worship.
>
> Churches should recognise young people and young adults as equal members of the Body of Christ.
>
> Churches should be encouraged to explore the possibility of admitting baptised children to Communion before Confirmation.
>
> Churches should become unconditionally welcoming places for young people.
>
> (2016, p.3)

The research findings, from amongst an older young adult and parent demographic, support this thesis. What is omitted from the C of E research, however, are the voices of children. Children are still being treated as passive beings (Withers, 2006). The report is also a 'top-down' commissioned report. I contend that this approach needs to be complemented by insider qualitative research in parishes.

In this section I have presented a chronology of developments in the Church of England about children and church, which lead to a recommendation that a pilgrim model of church best expresses a way of being an inclusive church together in contrast to school and family models. To explore the theoretical perspective of a pilgrim church I have examined children's ministry today and the concept of a baptismal ecclesiology. These have led me to the conclusion that the child as church in a being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way is a key ecclesial characteristic of a pilgrim model of church. To realise a pilgrim model of church the worshipping community needs to accept the ministry of children. The generosity and trust involved needs to extend to adults making way, or overaccept and in so doing, following Crossan's exegesis, to let go the status of adult and become like a child as a sign of the kingdom.

A similar sentiment is expressed in more capitalist terms, as overinvesting meaning 'giving yourself away.' To overinvest in young people means including young people in every aspect of community life, (Odem, 2013). A pilgrim model therefore, is recognised not only as a child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-

child-like-way, through an ethos of generosity in making way for young people and investing trust in them, but also in becoming like children.

3.2 Co-curation

In this section I begin with the work of curation in worship. I then explore the development of curation in the worlds of art and museums which has led me to co-curation. Co-curation offers a theoretical perspective which sees the congregation, not merely as participants in an event that has been prepared for them, but as co-curators fully participating in an unfolding worship drama. In this way co-curating worship is a way of putting into practice a pilgrim model of church. The contribution my research makes is about adults and children co-curating together and the effect that has.

3.2.1 Curating worship

When striving to achieve best possible liturgical worship the priest or worship leader draws upon the same elements of heritage preservation, new work and tradition as the museum or art curator. The relationship between liturgy, the sacred space and the curating of works is shown in two publications from the 'emerging church' movement at the radical edge of developing liturgical practice. In *Curating Worship* the concept of a worship curator is stated as the one '...to open up a space where anyone can contribute on an equal level' (Baker, 2010, p.31). The model of worship curation presented is that of a facilitator who creates so that others can participate. However, the curatorial role is seen to be a solitary task worked out for others, not a shared enterprise with others.

In *The Worship Curator*, collaboration is mentioned but the worship leader is still essentially the provider, the one in control: 'it allows me to shape a worship event with both internal and external integrity while still being open ended in the ways I think worship should be.' The worship curator controls the worship event, 'aggregating' and 'pruning' for the gathered congregation (Pierson, 2012, pp.33-38). Like Baker, Pierson's view of worship curation appears focussed on the presentation skills and power of the curator, which, disappointingly, no matter how exciting and cutting edge it may appear to be, remains situated within a traditional form of liturgical practice where one or a few leaders prepare and present the liturgy for the rest of the worshipping community.

Curation alone suggests a doing for activity and more in keeping with the school and family models of children's ministry described in 3.1.1. Curation does not satisfy a pilgrim model of church expressed as child as church. However, contemporary debates about curation and the role of the curator in the secular exhibition world offer new ways of thinking about curating worship.

3.2.2 Co-curation

The purpose of co-curating in the art and museum worlds is to focus upon being with others in creating something rather than a few experts doing the work for others. Co-curation is seen as increasingly important to learning and engagement: 'Co-curation and similar techniques gathered together under the umbrella of "participation" describe a range of practices in which lay people work to develop displays and programs within museums' (Boon, 2011, p.1). Involving the general public right from inception through to final display, rather than the traditional invitation to view at the end of the curation process, is seen to deepen the experience of engagement with the artefact/s. This new focus in curation - on opening up to everyone the experience of engaging with art - is seen to be inherently transformative. This shifts the focus away from what is being curated to the relational process of curation. Gadamer states:

> …the work of art is not an object that stands over against a subject for itself. Instead the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it
> 2013, p.102

This led me to question the role of curation in the event itself and discover a distinction between curation and the curatorial, that is, between the curation of an event and 'its enactment, dramatisation and performance' (Martinon and Rogoff, 2013, p.ix). Working in the field of art curation Martinon and Rogoff have shifted the focus from the act of curating to the experience of engaging with it: 'precipitating our reflection, of encouraging another way of thinking or sensing the world' (2013, p.ix). The focus upon what is experienced, described as the curatorial, resonates with Gadamer's thesis that a relationship is formed between the object curated and the viewer, which is transformational. The consequent emphasis is on participation and inclusion throughout the event (the curatorial) and the necessary incorporation of all who participate in the overall curation (of which the curatorial is one element). The

curatorial then, is being present together or indwelling, in order to bring something new into being.

3.2.3 Co-curating worship

Like the curating of works of art, curating liturgical worship is always undertaken with the intention that is has the capacity to deepen experiences. I contend that co-curating worship is important to spiritual flourishing. It comprises two key elements: the striving for the extraordinary and the incorporation of all who participate. The co-curation of worship is thus the key element in the model of child as church, one of whose key features is inclusion. Co-curation can satisfy a pilgrim model of church expressed as child as church: 'It experiments, reshaping and reconfiguring the world, delighting in what it finds' (BCCCG, 1991, p.61). This led me to devise a working definition of co-curation in liturgical practice.

> Co-curation is the participation of the whole worshipping community in the practical process of making manifest the presence of God.

This research is concerned with the experiences of children and adults co-curating the Eucharist together. The experiences gathered and analysed are drawn from the curatorial: the engagement of children and adults with what is being co-curated. It is important then to give a picture of co-curating the Eucharist with children as it is practised in my churches.

St O and St E have teams who come together before services to prepare the worship. This will involve preparing the altar and the other liturgical elements needed for a Eucharist. Sometimes children help with the getting ready. Each person in the worship team has a symbolic role in the worship: a crucifer leads the opening procession carrying a large cross, representing the cross of Christ. At St O the crucifer is preceded by a thurifer swinging a thurible (an incense burner) representing the prayers of the people. At St E there is also a children's cross carried in procession by a child. There are two acolytes who carry candles in the procession, representing the light of Christ and who serve at the altar. Also in the procession is a deacon, sometimes a sub deacon as well, and the priest. Each of these adults will wear an alb (a white vestment) and has liturgical actions to undertake during the service before the procession reforms at the end of the service. Before and after the service the worship team prays together. When we are co-curating the Eucharist with children

the children decide who they would like to partner from each of these liturgical roles. We say the vestry prayer together then form the procession. Each child walks alongside their partner adult, sits with them and moves with them during the service when the liturgical actions are happening.

The children do not wear an alb and are not on a rota like the adults who lead worship. This isn't to say that children cannot be formally involved in this way and some may choose to do so. The importance of co-curation with children is the inclusivity of the invitation. Any child, even if it is their first time in church, can choose to help make the worship happen. There is no rehearsal, the child simply chooses who they would like to be with once they hear a simple description of the roles. In this way there is always a sense of improvisation or the provisional. With children co-curating the Eucharist no two services are ever the same because they are children and behave in their own way. The children are invited to carry an LED light if they would like to and they have come to be known as light-bearers.

When children co-curate the Eucharist at St O and St E the resulting curatorial of worship is natural and beautiful, as the results of this research presented later will show. From a Church of England perspective on creating holy spaces and spiritual flourishing, Billings (2004, p.174) writes of the need today to rediscover an 'Anglican aesthetic'. He poses the rhetorical question: 'do Anglicans believe that God is "beautiful" and therefore God is best expressed in beauty?' Billing's argument is that creative attention needs to be paid to 'a more holistic account of human spirituality,' where 'all our senses will be involved, and our imagination, and our affections' (p.174). The child as church model of worship mirrors God's creative process where personhood or the importance of each individual is of primary value; where the excluded are included and power shared. Christians believe that God is in each person and when people come together God is made manifest: 'For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them' (The Bible, Matthew. 18:20).

The agency or power of children is very evident in co-curation. From the point a child chooses to participate there is an element of spontaneity. None of the other worshippers can legislate for the way the service will go or for the impact of the presence of the child. Each child will be present to the worship in their own way. It is in the reality of children being themselves that their agency for transforming people

and situations lies. My conclusion is that the co-curation of worship is a manifestation of child as church and where the curatorial of that worship expresses child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way.

3.3 An experiential understanding of education

The third theoretical perspective for this research focusses upon developments in education which sees the spiritual development of children as being as important as their cognitive and emotional development. Drawing upon Gadamer (2013) and Martinon and Rogoff (2013) I have argued that the primary focus of co-curation is the experience of engaging with. It always involves the sense that we are jointly participating in bringing something new into being. In doing so we are learning more about the God we are worshipping and of our own sanctification.

Through the curatorial of worship co-curation is an unfolding process: a process of revelation, mirroring the divine creative process. If, as I have suggested, co-curating worship is the practical process of making manifest the presence of God then it is important to explore the relationship between that process and pedagogy. Here I explore what is meant by experiential learning and how this is important to co-curation's capacity for the spiritual development of children as well as adults.
The key elements of experiential education particularly relevant to this thesis are agency and power. These issues are important to experiential education and its relationship with the co-curation of the Eucharist. With reference to the literature of experiential education I will locate 'children's agency' within this discussion.

3.3.1 Experiential learning

Dewey is regarded as the pioneer of experiential learning. His ideas, originally published in 1902, questioned the received pedagogy where: "externally presented material, conceived and generated in standpoints and attitudes remote from the child, and developed in motives alien to him, has no such place of its own" (2013, p.23). Dewey, therefore, saw the learner as having agency or power in their own learning. Agency is born out of a connection or relationship from within: 'established between the mind and the material' where the child is given opportunities to make connections with their prior knowledge and experience of the world. Making connections helps a child make sense of and apply new knowledge grown from 'his own past doings,

thinkings and sufferings', and where that knowledge can be put to use 'in further achievements and receptivities' (p.23).

Another pioneer in the field of experiential learning in the earlier part of the 20th century is Vygotsky. He argued that the way we understand and learn is not about isolated or 'individual phenomena' but relational: 'social and cultural' (2003, p. 1). Vygotsky's thesis has led to researchers and practitioners in the field of education come to a deeper understanding of the role of social and cultural foundations in classrooms (p.2). Vygotsky also saw cognitive development as '...an acquisition of symbolic tools' for a child's 'imagination and emotional development' (2003, p.4-5).

In 2010 the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), published its new syllabus for RE in schools. Influences of Vygotsky can clearly be seen in its approach to teaching the subject today, with an emphasis on enquiry, investigation, comprehension, questioning, exploring and reflection as the learning vehicles to 'developing.... [their] own sense of identity in terms of beliefs and values' (Rotherham Agreed Syllabus for 2011, pp.6-10). However, despite these developments in education theory and practice I question how far investigative and reflective approaches as tools for learning are used in ministry with children.

The importance of acquiring tools for learning is evident in Corsaro's sociological study of childhood (2011) which offers the idea of 'interpretive reproduction' to describe 'the innovative and creative aspects of children's participation in society' (p.20). Concepts of power and agency are key to an understanding of children who are not simply internalising the society and culture around them, but 'actively contributing to cultural production and change' (p.21). The problem for developing a pilgrim model of child as church is that children are not recognised as fellow pilgrims actively contributing to its journey. In a journal entry I describe a Prayer Walk around a church yard with a Year 6 class.

> We passed the grave of a nine-year-old boy. The children wanted to talk about death, sharing their thoughts and memories. We moved on to where I had laid out a collection of objects ranging from the religious to those with no obvious connotations. I asked the children to choose one and to find a quiet space to sit and to let their object speak to them. There was an intentional choosing by the children of a quiet space alone in the long grass. The silence extended to several minutes…A paradigm shift appeared to have taken place from the everyday and sceptical to a more spiritual dimension.
> Journal 1, 2014, p.12

My thoughts on re-reading this entry are that the children began to shape the session. The children's spontaneity in selecting their object, choosing their space for reflection and deciding what they would like to share about their experience meant that the learning experiences for all of us became child-led. Corsaro explains 'the importance of language and cultural routines and the reproductive nature of children's evolving membership in their culture' (p.21). This inhabiting of the language of the culture and its routines, which together shape the development of that culture applies to the society of the church community. In the Prayer Walk the children began to inhabit the cultural context of the church graveyard and become agents for the deepening of the spiritual experiences of all those on the walk.

Worship co-curation is a way of learning by being and doing in equal measure. It is a form of tacit learning whereby knowledge is held and gained by experience, insight, intuition and observation. It is the sort of knowledge difficult to pass on formally in written or verbal forms. My argument is that co-curating worship is a means of learning by being and doing in reaching a goal of the child as church. The case that worship with children can be practice of co-curation is informed by the inclusive theology of worship of child as church I have described.

3.3.2 The agency of children

Waller draws upon Corsaro's thesis of children as 'active agents' who have the 'competence and capacity to understand and act upon their world' to develop the argument that children 'have the right to participate in processes and decisions that affect their lives' (2014, p.35). The participation of children in cultural routines is seen as valuable to feelings of belonging to a community (p.39). Waller's conclusion is pertinent to the involvement of children in this research. Children need to be given space to express 'their views and perspectives beyond the constraints of adult views, interpretations and agendas' (p.40). I was very mindful of this when constructing a methodology where the children were given equal space and freedom to talk about their experiences of worship.

Learning about the experiences of other research conducted with children has been essential in my research journey. For example, in drawing upon her experiences of researching children's dreams, Adams (2009) argues for the importance of hearing the spiritual voices of children in schools, in the light of advice given in 2004 by

Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education). In making her case however, that all children, including those of no faith background, should be able to voice their spiritual experiences, Adams makes an assumption that, 'Children from faith backgrounds have the freedom to express their spirituality within the context of their religion' (p.118). I would argue that children, at least in the Church of England contexts I have experienced, do not aways have the freedom to express their spirituality. My research however, offers such an opportunity.

A perspective that sees children as agents of change requires the church to see that it is marginalising children if it fails to see what they bring to eucharistic worship.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary lists a range of definitions for child:

1a a young human being below the age of puberty

1b an unborn or newborn human being

2 one's son or daughter (at any age)

3 a descendent, follower, adherent, or product of

4 a childish person

(1990, p.195)

Another definition could be added to this list: a child is a person without power. The incident of mothers bringing their children to Jesus to be blessed is recorded in all three synoptic gospels. Jesus deliberately selects a small child to illustrate the reality of God's kingdom (The Bible, Mark. 10:14). The central question discussed by Crossan in his exegesis of Mark's Gospel, is how Mark may be seen to challenge the twelve disciples as leaders of the church. Crossan suggests that Mark's vision is 'an exaltation of the nameless over the named' (2012, p.175). When Jesus places the child in their midst the child represents the nameless, the servant, the powerless.

Like Crossan, White counters a romanticised view of the gospel scene by drawing upon the virtue of a childlike spirit, which is not passive or empty but full of spiritual qualities that the church needs. A direct link is made between Jesus' radical teaching about the reality of the Kingdom of God and how this should be expressed in our churches by seeing children as 'active participants in the unfolding story' in 'representing the radical nature of ecclesial community' (2001, p.356).

Although children may not have power in the sense of being able to make decisions for themselves or on behalf of others, for example being able to vote in a government election, children do have agency. Barclay's discussion of what Jesus means when he says that the Kingdom of God consists of those who are like children suggests a range of qualities: 'a sense of wonder…unquestioning trust, instinctively to obey, to forgive, and to forget.' This 'childlike spirit' is the only way we gain entry to the kingdom (2001, pp.268-269). These characteristics of a child demonstrate a pilgrim model of child as church. This is a different sort of power. I believe this gospel account gives us four reasons why it is important that children are present in worship as a means of realising a child as church model.

1. Children are signs of the kingdom
2. Intergenerational worship is not obviously seen as part of children's ministry
3. Children are agents for transformation
4. It is unethical to exclude children from worship with the rest of the community.

I contend that experiential learning is important to a pilgrim model of church where inclusion and communion informs a way of being as child as church in a being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. The presence of children in worship is important for their experiential learning about what it is to be church but it is also important to the whole church. Their presence as signs of what kingdom values are, that God's kingdom is not networked but holistic and that children can affect the experiences of everyone present.

3.3.3 Godly Play

One practice of experiential learning in children's ministry is Godly Play. Jerome Berryman first conceived of Godly Play after engaging in the Montessori method of education. For Berryman, Godly Play has always been about 'play with God and the community of children' (2013, p.88). Learning and sharing the language of words, symbols and codes is likened to learning a second language, with its 'toolbox' of 'sacred stories, parables, liturgical action, and contemplative silence.' Berryman sees that each of these aspects of Christian language need 'a different skill, awareness of tone, and a special art for using its form and content to make meaning' (p.4).

Godly Play is in keeping with a pilgrim model for community and discipleship. The programme 'uses symbols and objects as well as words…values process, openness and discovery…encourages people to make meaning for themselves' (godlyplay.uk, 2016). My work with Godly Play has shown that the spiritual experiences of children are as credible as for any adult and that children naturally inhabit sacred spaces and contribute to making God manifest. We are co-curators participating in the curatorial of Godly Play together. Godly Play's open-endedness is emblematic of a pilgrim model for worship where everyone is an experiential learner setting out on the journey of discovery together, not quite sure where it will lead but receiving from each other along the way.

3.3.4 The role of play

It is clear that play is important to experiential learning. Gretchen Ziegenhals, in a blog entitled 'Playing Church' (2/12/14) describes a visit to the ancient cathedral in Linköping, Sweden, where she encounters, in the body of the church, a purpose-built cupboard which opens out to reveal all the liturgical objects for playing church. Ziegenhals welcomes the way the cathedral openly expresses its view that children learn best through play and that, 'play is life'. Where children are invited to play church, is not in an ante room, but in the heart of the sacred space. There are two explanations for this. First it is about hospitality: 'It does not wait until the children are ready to participate in, say, a youth program, to think about leadership. Nor does it wall off the role of bishop or priest and the ornate vestments and trappings as too sacred for children's role play.' It is also that, amid all the historical sightseeing, this cupboard is a witness 'that this congregation wears its history proudly and lifts up its children as equally important to the life of the church' (2/12/14). Ziegenhals is describing one church's example of care and overaccepting. The care of the nurturing of the spirituality of children has led the worshipping community to let the children be themselves: to play at worship in this holy place. In 'overaccepting' they have had to let go of any aesthetic sensibilities held for an ancient building. It is a complete reassessment of what is precious to this worshipping community.

The role of play in experiential education relates to the work of Gadamer, and in particular, the exploration of Gadamer's ethics of play by Vilhauer. The work of Gadamer (1975) on truth versus method leads him to conclude that the universality of

hermeneutics where all that is brought into being, can be understood as language. All things have language, so we can speak, for example, of the language of art (2013, p. 490). We can see this also in Berryman's emphasis on learning the language of words, symbols and codes (2013, p.88). Gadamer's hermeneutical enquiry leads him to see the experience of understanding as play (Vilhauer, 2010, p.25).

Throughout the work of Gadamer we can perceive an ontological thread 'that allows one to show the Other the highest level of respect and make the most progress with him in the dialogical quest for understanding' (Vilhaeur, p.94). This is seen as an ethical approach to genuine dialogue 'where interlocutors may come to understand each other about some subject matter and share some truth about their world' (p. 94).

There are analogies here with a Godly Play session (the play of shared engagement in the common enterprise of story presentation, wondering questions and creative response time). A comparison can also be made with the play cupboard in Linköping Cathedral and the Common Prayer of Taizé. Each become quests for understanding through the play between each other, the sacred space and God. These are all important to an understanding of the relationship between co-curation and experiential learning.

3.3.5 Being with children

I have established that the agency of children and play are important to experiential learning. My next step is to propose that if experiential learning is a characteristic of worship then we need to create opportunities whereby children and adults can discover, through experiential learning, more about themselves as spiritual persons by being and learning along side each other. In a child as church model worship becomes a shared learning experience whereby the adult has as much to learn about the child and God as the children they are accompanying on the pilgrimage journey of faith. Wells describes Jesus's three years of ministry in Galilee as 'building a social movement, offering moments of training, truth, healing, controversy, confrontation, learning, revelation, and challenge.' Wells takes the view that, at least in the West, education and health care are 'two forms of life' that bear most relationship with a description of Jesus's Galilean ministry (2015, p.187). Throughout this ministry Jesus's primary mode of being is being with.

This section presents theoretical perspectives of an experiential understanding about how we learn. I have shown the importance of the agency of the learner in the learning process and of play as understanding in active engagement with our experience and the world. This has led me to see that in the worship of a pilgrim model of church, co-curated with children, we learn together experientially by *being* together. And by being present together to worship: in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way something deeper is brought into being. To bring something else into being is a sign of spiritual flourishing.

3.4 Children's spirituality as relational

Hay (1990, pp.32-39) argues that we are all innately spiritual but our sense of this becomes lost as we grow up. As a church therefore we need to help people of all ages rediscover this core spirituality but also address the very real question of why it may be lost in the first place. Hay describes religious experiences as self-authenticating. Each is valid in and of itself without recourse to external factors to give justification to the experience. My encounters with God when working with children, are authentic expressions that do not need any external justification. Hay states that the focus of researchers should be on the 'perceptions, awareness and response of children' to ordinary activities which may signal moments of transcendence (p.60).

Nye uses the term: 'relational consciousness' to describe the childlike spirit or 'core spirit' of the child (Hay with Nye, 2006, p.109). Through research in two Midlands primary schools Nye identifies this core theme of spirituality existing along all parts of a continuum from that of children with no religious experience to those with much. The core value presented was the revelation of the child in relation to self, or to others, or to God, or to the supernatural. In trying to express deep feelings the children struggled with the limitations of language but their responses were always 'in relationship with'. A fundamental concept for the Christian belief in a Trinitarian God is the calling to be in relationship. Hay sees Nye's identification of relational consciousness as the key outcome of her research into children's spirituality: 'a way out of the straitjacket that currently binds our ethical and religious institutions' (p.172).

Nye identifies six criteria for nurturing the spiritual experiences of children: Space; Process; Imagination; Relationship; Intimacy; Trust (2009, p.41). These are

applied to the nurturing of spiritual foundations and to the nurturing of spiritual practices (pp.41-70). The relational aspect allows for spontaneity and freedom of expression because co-curation is the practical process of co-creation: the dynamic of God with us, with each other. This journal entry shows the response by a three-year-old to the Godly Play story: The Parable of the Good Shepherd:

> During the wondering questions one little boy talked about his Gran who had died. Though the story did not mention death, the presence of the wolf, the prospect of being lost and the actions of the good shepherd in saving the sheep, led to the child saying 'I know my Gran is not lost but safe'.
> Journal 1, 2014, p.5

Vanier (1979, p.42) describes community as covenant: 'To enter into a covenant is to discover that there are bonds between us and our God, that we are made to be his children and to live in his light.' It not only makes demands on each person to be responsible for others in the community but it is also accepting that we are vulnerable and weak and need to be carried by others. In worship particularly, this covenantal relationship flows between us and God and each other. Vanier insists that in entering into this covenant we enter into the heart of God and God's heart rests with the poor, the weak, the vulnerable (p.42). This is true, but part of a new ethical framework of co-curation with children sees the child in full and equal partnership. A reorientation of ecclesial practice would see that we become like children to enter the kingdom of heaven. Not because children are weak and vulnerable but because they are more authentically themselves. This **is** their agency. Children have not unlearned, lost or forgotten their innate spirituality.

The argument for giving children opportunities to voice their spiritual experiences is made again by Adams, with Lovelock, following a piece of qualitative research into children's experiences in sacred spaces: '…these encounters need to be collected from children in ways which enable them to give expression to their spiritual voices(s)' (2017, p.4). The findings show a relational element as a common feature of the spiritual experiences of the children who participated in the research: 'For some children there was a direct communication with God, with children reporting hearing God's voice talking to them directly, saying 'Do not be afraid' and giving them courage. For others, God's presence was evident in other forms such as Jesus, angels or deceased relatives' (p.5).

In the Eucharist however, unless especially curated for children, children are given few opportunities to discover or express their relationship with God. It is unusual to see children preparing the sacred space or helping to make the worship happen where the majority of the congregation are adults. However, informed by Nye's six criteria (S.P.I.R.I.T) co-curation with children may be shown to be a spiritual practice. My research seeks to ask whether these six criteria may be met in co-curation of the Eucharist:

- In involving the offering of a potentially holy SPACE where God may be encountered
- In the PROCESS of entering into the ongoing creative work of God
- In exercising the IMAGINATION in creating ways of God to be with children and adults and for children and adults to be with God
- In the opportunities created for the building of RELATIONSHIPS with God and with each other
- In the potential for INTIMATE encounters with God
- In the TRUST involved in the shared participation of working to make God manifest

3.5 A conceptual approach

In this chapter I have examined four theoretical perspectives important to this enquiry: a pilgrim model of church; co-curation; an experiential understanding of education; and children's spirituality as relational. The argument developed through literature is for a pilgrim model of discipleship, best expressed as child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. The research focus is the practice of co-curating the Eucharist as a practical outworking of that expression. The importance is also established of experiential learning to co-curating the Eucharist with children and the theoretical perspective that spiritual growth is borne out of relationship with each other and with God. From this discussion themes of discipleship, power and eucharist are drawn that inform a conceptual framework for research. These are explored in the next chapter. The conceptual framework comprises the context of the Eucharist in which all this happens. Eucharist comprises the practice of discipleship and the concept and practice of power which is a tool for critical analysis. These three

things when put together form a conceptual framework for the development of the research.

Chapter 4 A conceptual framework for research

In this chapter I define the key concepts, examined in Chapter 3, drawn from the four theoretical perspectives upon which to build an integrated conceptual framework for the research questions and methodology. Three conceptual ideas qualify the framework I have created. The chapter concludes with the research proposal and objectives for research that inform the methodologies and research design.

From an examination of the theoretic perspectives of a pilgrim model of church; co-curation; an experiential understanding of education; and children's spirituality as relational, I found that conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist run like threads through these theories. A pilgrim model of church epitomised as child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way is expressed as a journey of discipleship together and where adults and children learn from each other. Discipleship is a practice. Being part of, and included in, the life of the worshipping community is an important characteristic of discipleship. Co-curating the Eucharist with children is one practice pointing to a pilgrim model where discipleship is a process of discovery with children and adults being with each other. In this way discipleship develops through the experience of making worship happen. It is a spiritual experience reliant upon the forming of relationships, and where children's spirituality is understood as inherently relational.

Discipleship, therefore, is directly related to the theme of power. If the purpose of worship is to glorify God and to recognise God in each other as a sign of the Kingdom then children must be recognised and incorporated as fellow pilgrims not lesser pilgrims (Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin, 2014). When children co-curate the Eucharist the relationships involved require a giving away of power by adults and the placing of trust in the agency of children.

The Eucharist is a form of worship that is inherently about inclusion, community and communion where every member should be part of the discipleship journey. Eucharist is the context for this research. It is also a way or concept theme that describes communion where the child as church is made manifest in co-curating the Eucharist and where the curatorial of that worship expresses being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. I have drawn out these conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist to qualify an integrated framework for a research methodology

that will discover if co-curating the Eucharist with children contributes to the spiritual flourishing of the church.

4.1 The concept of discipleship

The first concept to draw together the important elements of the theoretical perspectives is discipleship. Discipleship is essentially a practice that I am using as a concept. It describes the way people become followers of another person they look up to. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus instructs his disciples or followers to go and do likewise: 'Go therefore and make disciples . . . , teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you' (The Bible, Matthew 28:19, 20). This is often referred to as the great commission. In Chapter 3 literature relating to school and family models of children's ministry were explored. These have been the traditional modes of teaching in the church in order to make disciples (*Children in the Way,*1988). These top-down models involve knowledge about the faith taught by experienced adults to children and those new to faith. This is to confuse teaching about Christianity and becoming a Christian. Experiential learning, however, allows for reflection and questioning through the agency of the learner being involved in their own learning (Waller, 2014).

Nevertheless, there is a tension here between learning in the way of discipleship, where the pupil learns from someone more experienced, and experiential learning where the learner gains knowledge primarily through their engagement with the world. Co-curation acknowledges this tension. A child partners a more experienced adult who models the curation of liturgical actions. However, the practice of co-curation is not a model whereby the teacher shows the pupil how to do something then they try it out for themselves at some point when the adult feels the pupil has learnt enough to be able to demonstrate their learning. In co-curation the child accompanies the adult. The child experiences liturgy and liturgical actions by being involved in them, experiencing them, internalising them.

Co-curation is also a shared learning experience because the adult also learns from the child. This is a pilgrim model of discipleship expressed as child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. The 1988 report concluded that a pilgrim model is the most appropriate description for discipleship. In a pilgrim way discipleship is seen as an experiential journey of adventure on which the individual

travels and though for each person the journey is different, the journey is relational: with God and with each other. Intergenerational worship is an enabling and affirming part of the journey of discipleship for all those taking part. Resources produced by the Liturgical Commission: *Worship Changes Lives: How it works, Why it Matters* introduce the concept of a journey of discipleship described in three main phases: belonging, becoming and believing:

- We **belong** to God and to each other in the worship we share.
- We **become** the people God wants us to be through worship.
- We **believe** in God and that belief is shaped by our worship.

(2008, p.3)

The research is designed to discover whether, when children are co-curating the Eucharist, the sense of belonging of all those present (adults and children) is increased. It is also important to discover whether children begin to inhabit the sacred space and learn through ritual acts a sense of the pattern or road map of worship as a journey. The research is also concerned with the telling of my story and the church's story of ministry with children.

The relational aspects of a belonging, becoming and believing model of discipleship involve the looking out for, or pastoral care of, others by being with them. Chapter 3 explored these characteristics of a pilgrim model of child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. Willimon (1979) for example, sees spiritual development as directly relating to pastoral care. Any loss or undervaluing of the pastoral dimension of worship undermines the potential for spiritual flourishing where worship is 'a corporate and incorporating event' (pp.28-31). In addition, through the performance of ritual acts, those taking part in worship are situated differently through the play involved in encounter with liturgical acts: 'We stand outside ourselves to better see ourselves' and 'out of such experimental, playful, ritualised encounters' (pp.177-178). Willimon argues that growth and spiritual flourishing is realised through such encounters.

4.2 The concept of power

Relationships grown out of pastoral care directly relate to the second concept drawn from the four theoretical perspectives suitable to design an integrated conceptual

framework. The concept of power has political and ethical connotations. Scott and Cavanaugh (2004, p.1) state that the political is understood as the structures people put in place to organise society. The ethical dimension is evident in the second aspect of the political which, they describe as the ways groups and individuals govern and organise themselves. Graham, Walton and Ward (2005) argue that what Christians believe cannot be separated from the practices of being church through the way they worship and live the Gospel: 'Action for social justice always needs to be rooted in the practices of faith, such as prayer and liturgy' (2005, p.187). The argument is that the practice of the church must present a distinctive Christian ethical model to society as a whole. I contend that co-curation as a practice of ministry with children presents such a model where in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way in worship we express kingdom values of inclusion and communion.

The practice of co-curation is first, based upon children deciding whether they wish to participate, second, that the learning model is experiential, and third, that the learning experience is mutual. The adult experience is deepened by the presence of children. Yes, the child is participating in the practices and traditions of the worshipping community but the child is not being told what or how to believe. As McLaughlin states, there is a difference between the inculcating of fixed beliefs and the importance of a child having a stable belief system as part of their 'primary culture' (McLaughlin, 1994, p.180).

Ramshaw (1987) argues that the creating of worship, when seen as the work of one person, places the other in a child-parent relationship rather than as 'co-travellers' (p.18). This is an important argument in relation to a pilgrim model of child as church. The issue is a question of shared ownership for ritual acts, which can only be realised with wide and active participation (p.30). This is as true for adults as it is for children. One purpose of worship and ritual acts is to encounter mystery. By seeing this as a co-operative enterprise there is a mutual recognition that what is being sought is something other: that God is present and at work (pp.33-35). Recognising God's presence contributes to spiritual flourishing.

The inherent difficulty then of developing a pilgrim model of discipleship based upon child as church is misplaced power. Traditionally, in the Church of England the curation of worship happens by adults. The church may take pride in its welcome to others but the welcome comes with a caveat: 'this is what we do'.

Changing a ‘this is what we have always done’ mentality can only be achieved by making space for the other or by overaccepting or making way for the others as I discovered in the work of Wells (2004) and cited in Chapter 3 (3.1.4).

The success of this research enquiry is reliant upon children experiencing the Eucharist by being central to it. It is also reliant upon adults experiencing children at the centre of worship and upon children and adults being given a space to talk about their experiences. However, throughout the before, during and after experiences of co-curating the Eucharist with adults, the children may have no feelings themselves of being in a position of power or weakness. Children tend not to feel these things because they take the world as it is. There may be an irony in suggesting that children are victims or need to be liberated from the oppressive power of the church. Children may be quite happily employed elsewhere in their own activities while the Eucharist is taking place. Freire states that in order for a situation to be transformed the oppressed must know their situation because ‘only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both’ (Freire, 1970, 2017, p.18). Softening the power of the oppressor alone is seen as a ‘false Generosity’ (2017, p.18) whereas, true liberation relies upon a ‘true generosity’ borne out of a desire to fight ‘to destroy the causes which nourish false charity’ (2017, p. 19).

In the Luke and Amy examples I described in Chapter 1, it is clear that the children did not know their situation. Yet, from their weakness they transformed the worship for others. The true generosity required for true liberation in those examples clearly came from the children though they did not recognise it. The power or agency of the children was borne out of their innate spirituality and a particular manifestation of their presence at the centre of the curatorial.

My contention, based upon experience and the work of others cited in this thesis is, to exclude children from the worshipping community on the basis that the Eucharist is not a service for children or that children might disrupt the worship experience of the adults is an abuse of power and has no place in a pilgrim model of child as church expressed in co-curation, an experiential understanding of education and children’s spirituality as relational. Poling (1991) sees the abuse of power as a theological problem, stating that we need ‘new metaphors of community’ (p.126). Child as church is such a metaphor. In a truly intergenerational context those who

traditionally hold positions of power make way for those on the edge. Poling describes community as a web of relationships. By viewing our church communities through the lens of a web of relationships we come to understand better what he describes as the 'cultural reality as it affects our latent images of power and abuse of power' (p.126). Only then, by enabling power relationships to form in a mutually beneficial way: as a web of invisible but strong interconnected bonds between the elderly and the young, the worship leaders and the people, the young and the leaders and so on, can a congregation see, compare and understand the importance of intergenerational worship.

Poling also describes 'the resilient hope within the web that increases love and mercy' (p.128). Giving children the experience of co-curating the Eucharist is a means to build a positive web of relationships important to any community. Or, returning to an earlier image, co-curating is an example of true treasure (Freire, 2019) where the agency or power in the very presence of children at the centre of worship can be transformative and lead to spiritual flourishing.

4.3 The concept of eucharist

As the Eucharist is the context for this research it does not function as a concept in the same way as power. In New Testament Greek eucharist means thanksgiving. Christians come together in the Eucharist to give thanks to God for all they have received and to give thanks to God for the giving of his son to us. Throughout the theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 3 reference is made to the Eucharist. It is a form of worship, the context for practice in my churches and a means by which this research explores the question of whether co-curating this form of worship with children can contribute to spiritual flourishing. I am, therefore, using eucharist as the context for liturgical practice and a concept. It is the third key concept I am drawing from the perspectives of a pilgrim model of church; co-curation; experiential learning; and children's spirituality as relational.

The liturgy of the Eucharist is seen by Weil as inherently relational. But he goes further.

> …if the eucharist is truly the shared action of the whole people of God, then, in reality, all the members of the assembly are celebrants and concelebrants, not merely the priest.
> Weil, 2002, p.31

Weil presents a theology of worship that requires a giving away of power traditionally held by the priest celebrant. I contend that such giving away of power and inclusiveness are implied by the concept of eucharist. The celebration of the Eucharist involves the enactment of a liturgical drama that was instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper: 'do this in remembrance of me', and speaks of our heritage: 'This is his story, **this is our song'** (The Archbishops' Council, 2000, Eucharistic Prayer D, p. 194). New liturgies are created for new times; In the Church of England the liturgies and lectionaries for *Common Worship* were introduced in 2000. Each new expression of eucharistic worship though is still connected to the liturgical tradition.

Perham defines liturgical worship as sharing together through a 'subtle blend of word, song, movement, gesture and silence' (2010, p.28). Eucharistic worship involves the sharing of Holy Communion at its heart and may be regarded as 'the ultimate place of liturgical formation and transformation' (2010, p.32). Preparing or curating this kind of worship involves mixing and blending liturgical actions with the purpose of creating 'a setting where people with their infinite variety of personality and preference can experience something overwhelmingly wonderful that binds and draws together' (p.28). This creative process then is spiritual, relational and an experiential form of learning that may be likened to the co-curating of works of art, stories and museum collections.

The Eucharist then, is where all people, young and old, are invited to gather round a table to share in Christ's body. Eucharist as a concept is a radical, counter-cultural model of church built upon a pilgrim model of discipleship expressed as child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way, where everyone can feel empowered in making the journey of faith together.

4.4 Visualising the conceptual framework

A conceptual framework is a written or visual presentation explaining 'either graphically, or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, concepts or variables and the presumed relationship among them' (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.18). A conceptual framework is also a developmental tool which develops as participants' views and issues are gathered and analysed. It is a tool, therefore, to both inform the research questions, methods and methodologies and a means by which to revisit during the stages of data collection, analysis, interpretation

of the results and evaluation of the research. For example, an earlier conceptual framework I worked on showed concepts of care, overaccepting and co-curation. I came to realise however, through the examination of literature, that the four overarching theoretical perspectives examined in the research of literature pointed to discipleship and power as generalised concepts which embraced both care and overaccepting.

The framework I arrived at (fig.4.1) identifies the key concepts arising from literature that will inform the research methodology.

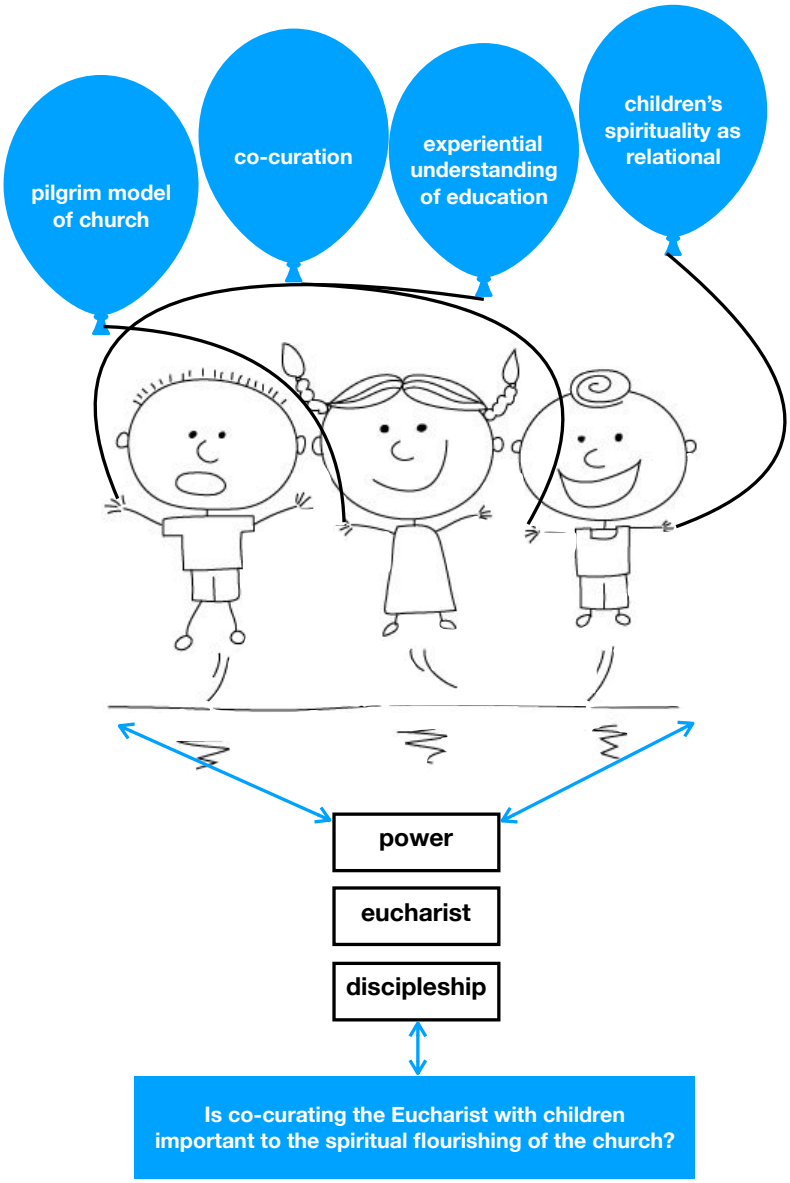

Figure 4.1 The conceptual framework

Most importantly, the framework summarises the mental image of the themes and patterns that have emerged from literature and my context and experience. It

accompanies the chosen methodology, informs my research method and design and clarifies my thinking in terms of the research issues. Choosing the form of a tree chart is intentionally symbolic.The purpose is to illustrate a relationship within the framework that works for my thesis. This iteration clarifies the investigation, enables readers to clearly see the research focus and seeks to achieve and explain how these purposes will be achieved (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p.86).

When viewing any tree, attention is first drawn to the canopy. This is formed from the theoretical perspectives derived from literature and are illustrated as balloons held by children. The children form the trunk of the tree. Play and freedom of expression is very evident here in the children floating/jumping above the ground. The children are floating above the key concepts. The children are not contained by them but they are part of their root formation. Below ground the root formation comprises the key concepts and research question as foundations for this research. The tree chart illustrates a move beyond descriptions of 'what' to explanations of 'why' and 'how'. The conceptual framework is a reference point/structure for the discussion of the literature, methodology and results. It demonstrates the boundaries of the research.

Conceptual frameworks however, can have problems of inherent bias because of the influences of experience and knowledge of the individual. Once developed, the framework may influence the thinking of the researcher and result in some elements given prominence and others ignored. The solution to these initial and ongoing biases is to revisit the conceptual framework, particularly at the end when evaluating my work. Provided initial and ongoing bias is acknowledged conceptual frameworks encapsulate the research as it sets out the focus and content. The framework acts as the link between the literature, the methodology and the results. It can be/will be the focus/starting point of the evaluation of originality in terms of the criteria outlined by Hart (1998). For example: is what has been focussed on entirely new? Is the way the subject is being investigated different to the 'normal' approaches? Has new light been shed on previously explored issues?

4.5 The research question and objectives

This section shows how I arrived at the research question at the root of the conceptual framework tree. It is concerned with how an integrated conceptual framework forms

and shapes the research question and objectives for research. According to Andrews a disadvantage of not having a clearly formulated research question at the start of an investigation is that the literature review may lack purpose and be 'hard to contain' (2003, p.17). I would agree with this. When the enquiry began I wasn't at all certain where the literature review and my reflexive practice were taking me. I was drawn to explore many different lines of enquiry. If qualitative work begins from an inductive position, seeking to build up theory, the conceptual framework is 'emergent' because existing literature/theories might mislead. However, my contexts and an examination of theoretical perspectives led to the establishing of concepts of discipleship, power and eucharist, which in turn led to the formulation of two questions for research:

1. Can co-curating the Eucharist with children be a natural part of the liturgical practice of a worshipping community?
2. How might this practice point to the importance of the ministry of children to the spiritual flourishing of the church?

The first question focusses upon practice with children, the second on the contribution children can make to spiritual experience. From these I formulated an overarching and ambitious research question as the foundation for the conceptual framework.

Is co-curating the Eucharist with children important to the spiritual flourishing of the church?

The research question has emerged from practice **and** literature in a reflexive relationship. It was only through an examination of the four theoretical perspectives that I was able to determine that each perspective contributes to spiritual flourishing. A pilgrim model of child and church requires the giving away of power by adults to make way for children at the centre of worship as a sign of the Kingdom. The examination of the literature has shown that children bring their own innate spirituality, spontaneity and creativity to the liturgy. The question is a means of discovering whether the presence of children, alongside adults carrying out the liturgical actions of the Eucharist, contribute to a curatorial of worship that becomes an experiential and relational learning experience for everyone. This points to co-curation's capacity to enable spiritual flourishing to happen.

From the examination of literature, thematic concepts of discipleship, power and eucharist have been drawn. The research question defines the key concepts for the enquiry. Andrews sees there are advantages in this approach. The enquiry is firmly rooted in the literature and will provide the coherence between this and the thesis (2003, p.17). The literature research has developed in a dialogue with Christian tradition and practice as part of the action-reflection cycle (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.26). The cycle has been an important means of reflecting, rethinking, evaluating and thinking again before arriving at the research question.

The question rests on the value of importance. Importance is a useful concept and may be evidenced in a variety of ways. First, it begs the question: important for whom? For most in the local communities around St O and St E the question of co-curating the Eucharist with children is unimportant and irrelevant. Yet the action of doing it may acquire relevance. For example at occasions such as Remembrance Sunday and where couples come to hear their Banns read or a parent to have their baby Christened. Co-curating worship with children may be important in establishing what and who the church is for. Vicarious religion acknowledges the implicit relationship between the worshipping community of a parish church and the wider community it serves: 'who retain some sort of belief, and who wish from time to time to make contact with the institutions with which they identify' (Davie, 2015, p.81). It was important to this research that voices from the wider community were heard. The first voice which this research was designed to hear therefore was that of people who do not normally attend St O or St E.

The second voice was that of the church members. Members of congregations have a vested interest. Those who regularly come to church want worship to work for them. Research among emergent churches has shown that, 'liturgy inspired and created locally was holy and beautiful precisely because it was local and authentic to those who offered it' (Gray-Reeves and Perham, 2011, p.38). Changes to the usual way of doing things can inflame passions and impede or enable change in equal measure. These voices needed to be heard. At St O and St E most of the regular congregants are older adults who might feel threatened by change.

The third voice, that of children, I contend is the least heard in the church but theirs are voices that can readily reveal the workings of God (Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin, 2014, p.12). In the field of education research the voices of children are now

normal, in line with the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which heralded a new way forward for the rights of children. Legislation followed in the UK giving rights of expression to children. The opinions of children are now sought on a whole range of education concerns. Ironically for the church, it is also in the field of education that arguments are being made about the importance of hearing the spiritual voices of children (Adams, 2009, p.113). Increasingly, in education research ways of enabling the spiritual voices of children to be heard and validated are sought and found. This work is born out of the argument that the spiritual voices of children have been silenced by an education system that focusses upon material need at the expense of spiritual nurturing: 'spiritual experiences do not appear to be valued widely enough for them to become a part of a serious everyday conversation' (Adams, p.117).

Yet in the church, where spiritual nurturing is its purpose, the spiritual voices of children have not been heard in any formal, methodological sense. This research is breaking new ground in the Church of England by enabling the spiritual voices of children to be heard and for their experiences to be validated in empirical research. Having a clearly defined research question informs the development of objectives that provide clear boundaries for the research methods and design. The scope of this research enquiry is summarised thus.

1. To collect data where none had existed at St O and St E about the presence of children in the Eucharist.
2. To discover the impact of worship where it was not co-curated with children and where it was.
3. For St O and St E to use the results to make decisions about future styles of worship.
4. For the findings to be disseminated in Derby diocese and the wider church to help other worshipping communities consider children in the worshipping life of their church.

Summary

Part 2 of this thesis has been concerned with an examination of four theoretical perspectives which offer an alternative mode of understanding and practice based upon a model of child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. From

the theoretical perspectives I have drawn key concepts of discipleship, power and eucharist. I have explored these concepts to develop an integrated conceptual framework and shown how these have shaped two research questions to arrive at an overarching question and objectives for the research enquiry. The contexts and concepts presented and discussed here provide the rationale and legitimacy for a distinctive piece of qualitative research. In Part 3 I will show how the integrated conceptual framework informs the methods and methodology for research.

Part 3 Research Design and Fieldwork

Introduction

Part 3 of the thesis explains the use of the conceptual framework to propose an inductive methodology which draws upon theology within a living theory of practice and a qualitative method for research. In Chapter 5 I present a rationale for working within an inductive paradigm as an insider researcher, to address the research question: is co-curating the Eucharist important to the spiritual flourishing of the church? I present four propositions for the methodology: it was inductive, rooted in theology and practice, set within living theories of practice and living theory as an interpretation of Participatory Action Research. I introduce my adoption of PAR with a brief detailed account of the main schools of thought on Action Research and its living theory off-shoots. In Chapter 6 I present the rationale for a qualitative method for research and use the four propositions to present the methods for research and research design. In Chapter 7 I explain how the research design enabled the collection of appropriate data to answer the research question.

Chapter 5 Research methodologies

The conceptual framework summarises key features of the enquiry. The question about the impact of co-curating the Eucharist was concerned with my practice. The children at the centre of the framework show how important children were to this research. It was concerned with the presence of children at the centre of worship. Their voices as well as those of adults were heard as co-researchers. The research was rooted in the theology of eucharistic worship as it is practised at St O and St E as part of Church of England practice. This may be likened to a classroom teacher exploring her practice within the context of education theory, and the teaching and learning experienced in her classroom from within the context of the school and field of education. This chapter proposes the rationale for the methodology that supports these features. Four approaches that I used are presented.

1. The research was inductive
2. The research was rooted in theology and practice
3. The research was set within living theories of practice
4. Living theory was an interpretation of Participatory Action Research (PAR).

5.1 Inductive research

My first chosen approach was inductive research as the research intention was not to test theory but to discover if new theory would emerge from the analysis of data. Features of inductive research were displayed throughout the research design, choice of data collection methods, fieldwork, data analysis process, interpretation of findings and conclusions.

Factors which informed this included a qualitative rather than quantitative approach to analysis. Qualitative research necessitates a constructivist approach where, according to Swinton and Mowat 'various interpretations can be placed on the same phenomena, all of which hold independent validity' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.35). Thus, I did not have or need a hypothesis to guide the investigation because the approach to it was open-ended; I did not know what I would discover from the responses of my respondents. This is in direct contrast with deductive approaches to research where a hypothesis or theory based upon prior work or knowledge is tested.

Carr and Kemmis state:

> relevant concepts, hypotheses and problems must be inductively developed from the 'raw data' provided by the study of the substantive area. Only then will it be possible to decide whether any formal theories are of use in furthering the formulation of adequate substantive theory.
> Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p.125

Robson draws upon Carr and Kemmis to refute an argument from 'the positivist "standard view" of science' that found inductive methods of enquiry, such as a case study approach, problematic. Case study is cited as an example of a qualitative approach to analysis. Robson argues that the important distinction between inductive and deductive modes of enquiry is not quantitative and qualitative forms of analysis but 'the fact that it is the outcome of a process of enquiry which is governed by critical norms and standards of rationality' (Carr and Kemmis 1986 cited in Robson, 2011, p.137).

The process of enquiry I undertook secured the best validity under the circumstances by collecting data from the co-researcher children and adults that was personal and impressionistic. I acknowledge that people's readings of their experiences may alter later. My approach therefore was one of constantly checking and seeking justification for the processes of interpretation (Robson, 2011). In this research, the authenticity of the experiences contributed to the validity of the research approach. Many of the tools used were specifically selected and applied for their reliability characteristics and therefore trustworthy. I only explored the situations that are presented in this thesis and not elsewhere. Thus I have no basis on which to recommend others to act on my conclusions in different situations. However, I can make propositions which others may be convinced are fruitful to test in their own contexts.

The participation of co-researchers who become the primary vehicles for change in practice suggested an Action Research (AR) method. This qualitative research method has its birth in the field of education. In 1975 Laurence Stenhouse developed the concept of 'teacher as researcher' that is still the rationale for all Action Research today (Townsend, 2013, p.4). This was seen to be a radically new method of research focussed on the practitioner, not only reflecting upon their own practice, but teachers 'testing its tentative hypotheses through research in their own situations' to effect change and improve the practices of the institution (Stenhouse,

1975, p.141). I contend that practical theology has inherited the Stenhouse legacy where practice informs research that informs practice. Graham (2013) states that the AR approach is rooted in ideals that are democratic, equitable, liberating and life-enhancing and ideally suited to research within both big and small organisations.

Since Stenhouse the AR method has developed into different models. One is Systematic Action Research. Here the research focus is linked by a common approach and inquiry by different groups or individuals 'engaging with a process of generating insights through some means of collecting and interpreting evidence' (Townsend, 2013, p. 27). The collected data leads to a deeper or broader understanding and the possibility of action or change.

A systematic AR approach, however, is observational in the sense that it involves watching and listening (Robson, 2011). A difficulty with observational methods of research, is the perceived need for an immersive approach that takes time. This may work well in a context where the group is established, for example a class of children and their teacher, but the context for this research was different. The research team involved those from the 'tribe' or congregation (2010, p.317) and others from outside. Systematic AR was therefore not an appropriate method to employ as it was only possible to bring the team together for a limited time.

5.2 Theological research

My second chosen approach within an inductive approach for the methodology was that the research needed to be rooted in theology and practice and the theoretical perspectives drawn from literature.

> Practical theology seeks to examine the theories and assumptions which underlie current forms of practice as well as to contribute to the development and reshaping of new theories which are then fed back into the practices of church and world.
> Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.26

One methodological development in the field of practical theology and Action Research is Theological Action Research (TAR) (Cameron and Duce, 2013). TAR attends to a four-voiced theology: operant; espoused; normative; and formal. Each of these voices represent different positions: what people of faith do; what they say they do; what the Christian tradition says (which will be different for different faith communities as well as for individuals), and what academic theologians have to say.

In this research the different positions were set within the usual position of the Eucharist as it is practised at St O and St E and the positions drawn from literature and shown in the theoretical perspectives. Operant and espoused positions are evident in the qualitative methodology for data analysis in this research. However, TAR was not an appropriate method to adopt as it is defined as '…a partnership between an insider and outsider team to undertake research and conversations undertaking theological conversations' (Cameron and Duce 2013, p.3). In this research there was no outsider and insider partnership team. Bringing in a team from outside to work with St O and St E would have negated the role of the insider priest researcher exploring a phenomenon from within her practice and with her congregations.

In this research theology was disclosed through the discussions in the co-researcher focus groups about co-curation with children. In an inductive approach the process was one of heuristic enquiry where the why and how children may be active participants in the worshipping life of a church community was a question if not a problem. The research raised questions about how and why worship is important. Etherington (2004, pp.110-11) suggests that it is a requisite of heuristic enquiry that the researcher be personally connected with the proposed research. This research was a process that led to discovery for all those involved including the researcher.

5.3 Living theories of practice

An inductive approach rooted in theology and practice led me to the third approach for the methodology: that this research was a living theory of practice. Living theory, though a form of action research, is distinctive in methodology by seeking new ways of more appropriately judging the quality of research in practice.

> …Humanitarian values of care and compassion, a concern with freedom and the right of all to make up their own minds how to do their research and how to live their lives as they wish, in negotiation with others who wish to do the same.
> Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.24

It is argued then that the key departure from more standard forms of social research is that a living theory form of action research contains within it the theories most appropriate for explaining the practice and that theories emerge from the practice the research is exploring. As a practice that focuses upon the insider researcher researching their own practice, living theory is helpful to practical theology.

Like practical educators in the field of educational research, practical theologians have had to fight for a place at the table in the field of theological research, in particular, refuting the argument that only people of faith within the academy can practice or generate theology (Miller-McLemore, 2014). Like practical theology living theory emerges from practice.

Central to this is the approach taken to data gathering where the researcher's reflective practice is an important aspect of the data gathering process. It was important to this research that the recording of my reflections before, during and after the field work became part of the evidence because I was seeking to discover what I was learning about myself as well as others who experienced the Eucharist co-curated with children. Living theory mattered to this research because the object was to discover whether this practice, so central to my values, was important to others. I was seeking validity for a practice where I was part of the situation (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.68). Involving others as co-researchers where they could also voice their experiences of co-curation was the second aspect of living theory and the methodology by which I could evaluate the learning about myself and others in the practice of worship.

Researching the effects of co-curating the Eucharist with children inevitably brought to light the preconceptions of all those present. A living theory methodology then, set my research within the field of phenomenological enquiry where the need to understand the biases of the co-researchers, myself and the wider church membership was integral to the enquiry. To collect data where none had existed meant going beyond the regular worshipping congregation to include the voices of the wider community and children. This is the social world created by those involved.

A phenomenological approach required the research to be complex to maintain its trustworthiness in reflecting a world also seen as 'complex and interconnected' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, pp.16-17). A feature of this phenomenology was a constructivist paradigm where I was not a distant observer of the research process but involved both as a facilitator of co-researching groups and as a parish priest leading the worship that was the subject of the research. This approach accepted the epistemology that meaning derived from the data was negotiated as 'an active process of construction and interpretation' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.36).

5.4 Living theory as an interpretation of Participatory Action Research

The fourth approach for an inductive methodology, and suggested by the features of a constructivist paradigm, was Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is a different model of AR that was much more suited to this research context as it involves shared watching and listening. PAR begins with the invitation to become involved. The generation of insights happens through time spent in reflecting upon what has been experienced 'as understood by the various participants' (Robson, 2011, p.190). A Godly Play analogy is useful in demonstrating shared watching and listening that leads to a time of reflection. This is described as the wondering stage: 'there are no predetermined answers to a wondering question' (Berryman, 2002, p.56). As in PAR answers emerge from the process and all are valid.

Using a PAR method, informed by the principles of living theory, enabled me to develop the research within an appropriately constructivist paradigm. As an insider researcher I was best placed to determine the living standards of judgement for research, I was also the subject for research as part of a process of discovery to see if theory would emerge from the reality of my practice. A living theory approach resonates with practical theology: 'at heart this method of qualitative research assumes the best people to research a given topic are those who have the most experience of it' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.227). Swinton and Mowat describe this as 'a thick description' which 'seeks to capture the essence of a phenomenon in a way that communicates it in all its fullness' (2006, p.123).

However a 'thick description' indicated an ethnographic approach which required a longitudinal study where 'a "thick description" of practice' is the result of 'an extended period of observation and participation in a community of practice' (Cameron and Duce, 2013, p.xxix). An ethnographic method was not suited to this research which by necessity was time-bound. The main purpose of research was to include the voices of children as well as adults, not as subjects for research but as co-researchers. This was not only to provide a form of 'thick description' through the quality of their experiences, but also the means by which the practice of co-curation with children could be introduced, evaluated and have the potential for change. The participants were involved for a bounded period of time in the way the worship unfolded or was enacted at each church and for the sharing of their experiences in order to tell its story. Theories of '*chronos'* or length of time as

opposed to '*kairos'* or quality of time were important to gathering a 'thick description' as an act of worship is not concerned with the passing of time: '*chronos* time' but '*kairos* time': the significance of time given to see God (Berryman, 2002, p. 19). For the purposes of this research, therefore, it was the significant experience of participating in a single act of worship that was important rather than a measure of experience of many services over time.

Conclusion

The four approaches for the methodology were drawn from the conceptual framework for research. The research was inductive in seeking to answer the question: is co-curating the Eucharist important to the spiritual flourishing of the church? The theoretical perspectives drawn from literature were rooted in theology and practice. A living theory PAR method for research provided the theoretical basis for the research methods and design presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Methods and work plan

In this chapter I demonstrate how an inductive and practical theological methodology informed the living theory method of PAR employed for this research. The methods are set within a qualitative research paradigm. The next chapter will give a detailed account of the people and processes involved, however it is important to provide a brief context for the methods I discuss here. The fieldwork included six focus groups: three for each church. Each set of groups consisted of a child group, an adult congregation group and another adult group recruited from the local community. The groups were small to enable each participant to say as much as they wanted in one hour-long session. Each group met first to get to know the others in the group and to experience a sample session. They met again for the 'live' sessions after the without co-curation phase when they had attended at least one service at the church for which they had been recruited. They met again after the with co-curation phase when they had attended at least one service when the children in the child group co-curated the worship. Each group met a further time to decide what they wanted to feed back to the other groups. The final session in each church phase was a plenary session when the three groups for each church met together and shared their findings.

6.1 Qualitative research

The importance of worship to people can be measured to a degree by using questionnaires to gather quantitative data. However, this was a social research study seeking to discover the personal experiences of those taking part and therefore best realised through qualitative means. A qualitative typology includes: verbal data collecting from which theories and ideas are allowed to emerge and evolve; the importance of context and personal perspectives, and the emergence and flexibility of research design.

Qualitative research takes place in natural settings focussing upon different social groups through the gathering of feelings and experiences, in this case, about worship the participants attended. The data needed to describe and explain experiences because it was derived from personal experience. The data therefore, was a representation of the reality of the experience of worship through the eyes of participants. I was also part of that experience but had preconceived understandings, which necessitated 'a radical openness to the experience of the other and a respect for

experiences that transcend one's own horizons' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.114).

Qualitative social research also acknowledges that the researcher's 'personal commitment and reflexivity' is valued together with their 'openness and receptivity' (Robson, 2011, p.19). This begins at the conception of the research questions. Andrews (2003) highlights the importance of putting yourself in the shoes of the person being asked the question. I found this approach to be very straightforward as the questions for research were not concerned just with a practice of co-curation with children but my practice of co-curation with children.

6.2 The living theory PAR method for research

An example of participatory research presented by Swinton and Mowat includes people from the subject group. In that research, the subject was people with learning disabilities. By including two people with learning disabilities the research avoided positioning people with learning disabilities as objects for research but active participants (Swinton and Mowat, 2006). The subject of my research was children. By including children as active participants I also avoided the trap of positioning the subject as object. In addition I used a living theory PAR method where, as an insider researcher, my practice was the subject for research. The main features of the method were: focus groups, action reflection cycles that involved comparison, features of Godly Play and the use of reflexive journaling.

6.2.2 Focus groups

The PAR method involved six focus groups. One group of co-researchers were from the worshipping community but there were two further dimensions important to this research. First, it was important for my churches to engage with the experiences of those who don't usually come to church and those of children who may or may not be church attenders. I hoped the voices of adults from the community who may have little or no experience of what usually happens at their local church on Sundays would enable the congregation to see with fresh eyes. Second, it was important that adults would hear the voices of children and see worship through their eyes. In this case it was fresh experience rather than the most experience which provided new insights.

In accepting my practice as subject for research I also had to face the reality that real change could only come from within the worshipping community, not

imposed by me, the priest. For this reason I chose to conduct group semi-structured data gathering sessions rather than one-to-one interviews. Robson makes the point in group interviews 'that other people are the audience as well as the researcher' which could lead to things being said prompted by another's response (Robson, 2014, p. 116). I saw that this could be both negative or positive to the integrity of my research. The choice to use groups however, was purposeful in the light of the research question focus. The attendance at a corporate act of worship elicited both individual and corporate responses to the experience of worship. Each group, talking about the same phenomenon, shared their own experience and this led to others following on, or building upon that response to give their own. In Part 4 of the thesis some data is presented where a respondent is shown to build upon the comments of another. It was also important to the method that the group, as a set of co-researchers, came to a view of what they would like to feed back to St O and St E about their experiences of the worship and of co-curation.

6.2.3 Comparative action reflection

The tradition of Action Research includes action-reflection cycles to explore a phenomenon. Living theory approaches action reflection through a set of questions about practice and theory (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.89). The questions invite the researchers to focus on their concerns, experiences, actions, the kind of data needed, influences, fairness and accuracy of conclusions, as well as learning from the experience. I have drawn upon this living theory approach to research the experience of worship without and with co-curation by children. Through each phase or cycle of data gathering the co-researchers in focus groups were able to express their concerns about worship, the experiences of the worship at St O or St E without and with co-curation and their involvement or action in the worship. They also agreed a common response to show what they had learned from the experience. As a practitioner researcher the questions were a starting point to guide my reflection but as a focus for a comparative study of worship without and with co-curation: 'each practitioner's account should reflect their own creative capacity for new knowledge and an articulation of new forms of knowing' (2006, p.89).

6.2.4 Features of Godly Play

To discover a suitable mode of enquiry to enable the co-researchers to effectively express their concerns, experiences and involvement in worship, I turned to Godly Play. Godly Play has recently become the subject of academic research, with the view taken that: 'research on the processes in Godly Play can also very well lead to completely new research questions and issues on a variety of different subjects' (Steinhauser, 2018, p.29). A Godly Play session consists of a storyteller forming the circle of participants, a door keeper who helps the participants enter and leave but does not take part in the sessions, a story told using objects, 'wondering' questions, a creative response time and a feast.

I used a Godly Play-style process with the focus groups by facilitating the forming of a circle so that everyone could speak, recalling the *story* of the worship the participants had attended, introducing w*ondering* questions, giving time for each person to reflect upon the questions provided and providing a drink and a snack. The presence of the data collector who played no active part in the session can be compared to the door keeper. I did not use the creative response time key to a Godly Play session. Though a key part of Godly Play, giving opportunities for the participants to write, paint or play with objects, was not relevant to the work of the focus groups. Godly Play-style questions have been tried and tested for many years with children and adults and found to be a valuable method for adults and children to articulate their response to a story.

A key feature of my method was the bringing to light of individual and shared experiences of co-researchers in a group context about worship. We can describe the shared experience as a shared story or a story shared: watching and listening as a story unfolds and sharing and learning from that experience. In Godly Play the participants become immersed in the story presentation. Berryman describes story as 'a unique way of knowing' (Berryman, 2002, p.21). In Godly Play an approach akin to a traditional monastic (*lectio divina*) model of reading scripture is adopted through a story presentation where the participants are invited 'to seek an intuitive understanding, to grow in wisdom, to savor the aesthetic value of the words and, ultimately to encounter God' (2002, pp.21-22). This may be likened to the experience of worship with others where for each person the experience will be different but all

are invited through liturgical word and action to come to a deeper understanding of their shared story as people of God.

The types of Godly Play questions I chose to use are particularly associated with presentations focussed upon liturgical action that: 'invite us to integrate our life with the worship of the Christian people' (2002, p.56). Through PAR and using Godly Play-style questions, the data gathered provided insights into the experience of what story the worship is telling from the perspectives of the newcomer, the regular and the child. The questions I used were these:

'I wonder which part of the service was the most important for you?'

'I wonder how being in the service made you feel?'

'I wonder how much of you was really involved?'

'I wonder where you came close to God and God came close to you in the service?'

The questions took the respondents on a purposefully deepening journey of their experiences from description and identification, through their feelings and involvement in worship and finally to the centre point of worship: experiences of God.

6.2.5 Reflexive journaling

The method of reflexive journaling acknowledges that as a priest researcher I was part of the setting: 'an approach that favours the experiential as evidence, the affective and imaginative as thought processes, and story as an important form of expression' (Dixon, 2012, p.59). In Chapter 1 I stated the importance of reflexive journaling to my practice as priest researcher. Important to this process were my research journals where I explored the relationships between me and my co-researchers and the data collected to create a 'coherent narrative' (Etherington, 2004, p.127).

Whitehead and McNiff (2006) liken the role of the researcher to a journalist who systematically documents all the information relating to an issue and strives to be as accurate as possible in what is reported. Important to the living theory method is the researcher's reflection upon 'episodes of practice' that demonstrate how her own learning has developed and how that new knowledge has influenced the learning of others (2006, p.64). One means of monitoring learning is self-reflection. The use journals to explore my reflexive learning began in Stage 1 of the professional

doctorate, well before I began the fieldwork, and concluded at the end of the data analysis. The entries focus upon episodes of my presiding at the Eucharist, the focus group meetings and times spent in Taizé.

Whitehead and McNiff advocate a sectioned diary with 'action…reflection…significance…new action' columns (2006, p.65). My diaries I acknowledge, were not organised as efficiently as this or even written as running commentaries. However, what I found, was the journal was the place to note meaningful occurrences and reflect upon them. What I also found was that my journals became mirrors reflecting the notice taken of my responses and the responses of my co-researchers and relevant encounters with others 'to my learning and action' (2006, p.68).

6.3 Purposive sampling

Robson describes sampling in relation to 'population' (2011, p.279). For this enquiry there were three population boundaries: a church congregation; adults from the local community who were not part of the congregations of St O and St E, and children between the ages of six and eleven with whom there was a connection through their parents or St O's Messy Church or St E's Junior Church. In each case what gave definition was the context of the church and area from which the sample was drawn.

Sampling is divided into probability or random methods where 'it is possible to specify the probability that any person…will be included in the sample' and non-probability methods where this is not possible (Robson, 2011, p.274). A probability method was unsuitable for this enquiry as it would be very difficult to specify that a particular age, gender or character be represented in each population other than the age range of the children's group. Even here a degree of flexibility was needed as I was reliant upon the recruiting of willing volunteers. Non-probability sampling however can still be pro-active in approach. The principle of purposive sampling relies upon the judgement of the researcher to build a sample that will satisfy the specific needs of the enquiry (2011, p.275). Purposive sampling was the method best suited to this project where the purpose was to hear the voices of a sample of the regular congregation, the voices of those outside the congregation but important to it, and especially, the voices of children. It was also important to the emergent process of data collection and analysis.

> As our focus of enquiry guides us in our initial sample selection, the early and ongoing analysis of the data will suggest what is important to explore further. Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.61

A disadvantage of purposive sampling is that the approach can create self-exclusion of the potentially less articulate. This is a significant issue for research with children and other marginalised groups. I did not discover this to be a particular issue in my recruitment process. The children were willing participants once recruited. Recruitment however largely relied upon parent availability to bring children to church and to the group sessions. Recruitment is discussed in the next chapter.

6.4 Piloting and monitoring

The Godly Play-style of wondering questions described in 6.2.4 were piloted with adult church members as part of the Transforming Worship course. I used the same style of questions with children from inside and outside the worshipping communities but not the children who would be my co-researchers. As I hoped, the open-ended nature of wondering questions provided interesting and useful responses. I took care not to mirror the questions or process of data gathering that would occur in the field work. The responses of any participants might change in the light of having already experienced the questions and data gathering process (Robson, 2011, p.88). I was also mindful that in choosing to put to participants the same themed questions twice in the process of the research their responses might change because of the previous experience.

The relevant Participant Information Sheets were piloted with children, parents, and members of church (though not with those who would ultimately participate) and with those who do not go to church. The feedback resulted in the use of simpler and more straightforward language for all groups (Appendix 6).

I used three aspects of monitoring as part of the PAR method. The first was that the co-researchers presented their findings to the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of each church as soon as the field work stages were concluded. The congregations naturally wanted feedback and it was important this came from what the co-researchers had discovered. The findings from my analysis of the raw data would come later in the research process.

The second aspect of monitoring was my method of reflexive journaling. Keeping a research journal and accurate records from the outset meant I gained an intimate knowledge of the data's revealed insights and reflexive knowledge. Reflexive journaling as part of the living theory PAR method gave the process the necessary richness of 'more rigour, breadth and complexity' (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.70, p.215).

Triangulation was my third aspect of monitoring. Triangulation of the data and findings was achieved through observer triangulation (Robson, 2011) by involving three teams of co-researchers from very different demographic positions in relation to the research enquiry. Each participant brought their own preconceived understandings of church and worship and related these to the experience of worship during the research. An independent data collector provided another observer to the data collection process. I also used member checking triangulation by preparing and returning a summary of the transcript to the relevant group for their amendments and affirmation. There was also a final 'peer debriefing and support' session where all the groups met together to agree the findings (Robson, p. 158).

6.5 Ethical considerations

I cannot impose change upon my worshipping communities but I am also someone in a position of power. To 'gather knowledge of the other' raises ethical questions of ownership (Swinton and Mowat, p.2006, p.34). This is why it was important that I did not contribute any data to the PAR method. Of particular concern to this research is the value of the child co-researchers. Children may be regarded by adults as having little experience to bring whether or not they already attend church. However, the research was purposefully designed to give children an equal voice with adults and to allow their voice to be heard. This meant enabling children 'to engage in research in positive and productive ways' and in my role as co-researcher and facilitator ensuring that all of the adult co-researchers met the children 'on their own terms' (Bucknall, 2014, p.82).

Having established that involving children in this research was necessary, my first consideration was whether children might be inconvenienced or harmed by the project. A second consideration was whether the proposed research would respect the rights of the child participant (Alderson, 2014). An application to the Faculty

Research Ethics Panel (FREP) at Anglia Ruskin University under the terms of their Research Ethics Policy (dated 23/6/14, Version 1) was a requirement. These considerations relating particularly to children within the wider ethical framework for this research were submitted and approved. The application covered selection and recruitment; design and content of Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms; identification of risk, and data security (Appendix 7).

In seeking advanced ethics approval I gave careful consideration to where or how participation in the research might harm a child or adult involved and what I did about reducing that risk. For example, could being asked to 'analyse' an experience of worship harm the spiritual life of a participant and who's worship becomes an object of study in their mind rather than entirely focused on God? I knew this to be a potential danger but the risk was mitigated by the introductory sessions. These were set up in the same way as the 'live' sessions to follow and used the same wondering questions. However, each participant reflected upon a favourite place instead of worship. The participants were put at their ease and the conversation flowed naturally. One child spoke about his bedroom, another about going to the beach. When the children talked about their experience of worship in the 'live' sessions their conversation flowed just as naturally and subjectively. The responses of the participants did not suggest their experiences of worship was an object of study, though of course they may have had these thoughts. This is always going to be a path that a researcher of religious practice must tread carefully around.

Setting a light, conversational tone in the introductory sessions also mitigated against the danger of my potentially powerful role as priest researcher. What became very clear was that my presence as facilitator didn't inhibit the participants from saying what they really thought about the worship I had led.

Chapter 7 Monitoring practice and gathering data

Here, set within the context of my own practice, a descriptive and factual account is presented of the recruiting of six co-researcher focus groups to gather data. The data gathering process is described and its relationship to the research issue of the place of children in the Eucharist as it is practised at St O and St E.

7.1 Recruitment

The groups needed to be large enough to sustain a discussion but a group size of more than six would make the managing of data much more difficult. The sessions also needed to last no more than an hour as the children would find anything longer difficult to sustain. The experience of facilitating parish study groups and classroom discussions was helpful. The final group sizes were between three and five. This enabled a rich discussion of the four questions and the data collector to accurately record who had said what to realise a verbatim account.

Table 7.1 Participant sample characteristics

Co-researcher groups with names anonymised as number codes and method of recruitment	
St O Child Group 6-11yrs 4 participants (8) aged 7, via Messy Church (9) left during phase A (10) aged 9, via congregation member (11) aged 6, attended Tuesday service with parents (12) aged 11, attended Tuesday service with parents	**St E Child Group 6-11yrs** 4 participants (21) aged 8, via parent contact (22) aged 10, via Junior Church, left during phase A (23) aged 8, via parental contact (24) left during phase A (25) aged 9, via parent contact (26) aged 11, via Junior Church
St O Community Group 3 participants (5) Messy Church parent (committed to neighbouring church) (6) Messy Church parent and friend of (5) (7) baptism enquirer	**St E Community Group** 4 participants (17) new to church (18) new to church (19) returner to church (20) new to church
St O Congregation Group 4 participants (1) congregation (2) server role (3) congregation (4) congregation	**St E Congregation Group** 4 participants (13) server role (14) congregation (15) congregation (16) server role

Table 7.1 shows the groups and characteristics of the sample of co-researchers recruited for each church. There was no intention to produce an analysis by gender so this was not a factor in the recruitment process. The boundaries for each group were based on simple criteria. Group A consisted of children between the ages of approximately 6-10 years. The children needed to be old enough to speak about their

experiences of the worship they attended and talk about them as a group. The upper age was purposefully below that required for Confirmation. Most Bishops in the Church of England set this age as eleven. After confirmation the church expects young people to be present in the Eucharist but not necessarily before. Table 7.1 also shows the methods of recruitment. Bracketed number codes were used to anonymise each participant. These were attached to each unit of data and the use of this method can be seen in Part 4: analysis of data.

7.2 The data gathering process

Table 7.2 shows the two-stage approach to fieldwork. The method was comparative to provide a thicker description. None of the co-researchers, including those from the present congregations, had experienced worship co-curated with children. Giving the co-researchers an opportunity to reflect upon worship without and with co-curation with children, provided a before and after dimension to the findings.

The data collection points are numbered 1-20 across both stages. It was not practical to timetable and manage data gathering points for two sets of church groups and return the transcribed and summarised data to the co-researchers in one three-month period. Running the fieldwork consecutively also meant that any lessons learnt from the method in the first stage at St O could be reflected in the second stage.

Table 7.2 Data collection process

Stage 1 St O September - November 2015		**Stage 2 St E January - March 2016**	
Phase A Without Co-curation	**Phase B With Co-curation**	**Phase A Without Co-curation**	**Phase B With Co-curation**
Child, Community and congregation 'meet the team' sessions		Child, Community and congregation 'meet the team' sessions	
Attendance at Sunday services	Attendance at Sunday services	Attendance at Sunday services	Attendance at Sunday services
1. Child Group Feedback Session	4. Child Group Feedback Session	11. Child Group Feedback Session	14. Child Group Feedback Session
2. Community Group Feedback Session	5. Community Group Feedback Session	12. Community Group Feedback Session	15. Community Group Feedback Session
3. Congregation Group Feedback Session	6. Congregation Group Feedback Session	13. Congregation Group Feedback Session	16. Congregation Group Feedback Session
	7. Child Group Summary Session		17. Child Group Summary Session
	8. Community Group Summary Session		18. Community Group Summary Session
	9. Congregation Group Summary Session		19. Congregation Group Summary Session
	10. All Groups Plenary Feedback Session		20. All Groups Plenary Feedback Session

One change was made in the light of the St O stage. The method asked that each co-researcher attend at least two services in each phase: without and with co-curation. Not all co-researchers attended four or more services but I discovered that the number of services the participants attended made no difference. Even the regular congregation co-researchers talked about their experiences of the service they had attended most recently. This accorded with the purpose of the research, to discover the depth, not the breadth, of experience of the Eucharist without and with co-curation with children. For the second stage at St E therefore, the participants were asked to attend at least one service in each phase.

In the first phase the co-researchers attended services that were not co-curated with children then met in their researcher groups to share their experiences using the wondering questions. I facilitated these sessions and employed an independent data gatherer who also transcribed the data. The process was repeated but this time the services were co-curated with children. The sort of semi-spontaneous co-curation did not involve rehearsals or the children speaking. The focus was on their presence at the centre of worship. As the data gathering process unfolded it was clear the methodology was working. The co-researchers and the serving teams found the research process interesting and the services a positive experience.

The research process was monitored throughout by the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of each church to ensure its integrity. The members received copies of the Participant Information Sheets and were present at the services when the co-researchers were present. This meant that when the PCCs received the relevant report from the co-researchers they recognised and understood the feed-back they were reading.

Each group had the same focus and responded to the same Godly Play-style questions. Group meetings lasted about an hour. At the meeting I posed the four Godly Play wondering questions to facilitate discussion of the group's experiences of the worship they had attended. There were supplementary questions as they arose from the discussion. An independent data collector/observer wrote down what was said and made an audio recording of each session. This way the accuracy of what had been noted could be checked. For consistency the same questions were put to participants in phase A and phase B of both St O and St E stages of research. At the start of each session the co-researchers were given visual reminders of the content of

the services they attended. Phase 2 of the research followed the same pattern as phase 1 with just one change: the services the participants attended were co-curated by members of the child researcher groups.

Following each session the data collector transcribed the raw data using her notes and checked them with the audio recording to produce a verbatim account. I made a further check and wrote a summary of each transcript. At the end of phase B the groups were given a summary draft of the sessions to compare the personal experiences of the worship experienced in phase A with phase B and to compile a report to feed back to the other two teams of co-researchers. The data collector was present to record any further comments and to make any editions to the draft. For the children's groups I read the summary sheet with them, checked for understanding and helped them make any changes.

The co-researchers found the summary sheets easy to understand and clear and accurate accounts of what they wanted to feed back to the other groups. Only minor amendments were needed. The group summaries formed the factual findings that are presented in Chapter 8.

In a final session the child, community and congregation groups met together for the first time to feed back their findings to each other and to decide what they wanted to tell St O and St E about their experience of the Eucharist co-curated with children. The participants agreed a final summary which was presented to their PCC.

7.5 Data analysis methods

The choice of a PAR methodology, where data is collected relating to a shared focus of enquiry, is indicative of a qualitative method of analysis where: 'what becomes important to analyse emerges from the data itself' (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 127). This approach involved deeply familiarising myself with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, constructing thematic networks and making comparisons between different aspects of the material. This gave flexibility when working within a participatory research paradigm and where the results of the analysis could be easily communicated to my congregations and diocese (Robson, 2011).

Inductive research involves collecting data that is initially non-numeric. The methods of data collection were qualitative in type and style and included some

frequency analysis of some of the recurring themes which initial coding identified. This was one method of seeking meaning within the data sets and shows consistency between an inductive research approach and the mode of data collection. The analysis of the raw data involved two methods of analysis: narrative enquiry and constant comparative thematic analysis.

7.5.1 A holistic narrative method

The first method used was a form of narrative enquiry to produce summaries of the group sessions. Narrative enquiry is a method of making meaning through which the researcher attempts to come to a better understanding of the phenomenon (Kim, 2016, p.190). Narrative analysis can take both ethnographic and phenomenological approaches (Robson, 2011, p.375). The enquiry has followed a phenomenological method. Summarising the raw transcripts of what was said in group sessions to arrive at as faithful a rendition as possible, involved interpretation to make meaning. No information gathered together in another form remains unmediated but is a process of negotiation (Swinton and Mowat, 2006). The summaries produced from the raw transcripts of group sessions formed a constructed narrative of the participants' experiences.

Narrative enquiry can also take holistic and sequential approaches to analysis. The first stage of summarising the data involved a holistic approach. The data was gathered at a group session where the co-researchers described the phenomenon or experience of attending the Eucharist. I put the four Godly Play-style starter questions in turn. From the session a verbatim transcript was produced. The next step was to reduce the data to produce a summary of each group session through a process of holistic analysis (Robson, 2011, p.375). This involved collating all the experiences of the participants around the themes of the research questions: importance, feelings, involvement, closeness to God. It was important that these were written in the same style for each group to provide consistency and readability by all regardless of age. I summarised the data using an indirect reporting style in the second person and omitting names. In all there were six narratives or stories: one for each group session.

The narrative produced was negotiated by grouping together the responses of different participants as a shared response. It is important however to note that the summaries were returned to the co-researchers for their amendments and

endorsement. In a further process of negotiation the co-researchers took ownership of the summaries as their faithful account of the experience of co-curating the Eucharist with children.

Furthermore, as an insider researcher in practice I brought my own thoughts and experiences to bear upon those of the co-researchers. I drew broad findings from the summaries which I compared to my own experience of co-curation. This is shown in Chapter 8 where the findings using this holistic narrative form of enquiry is presented.

The second stage was to disseminate and analyse the raw data. This involved a sequential form of narrative enquiry where the text was segmented or unitised to produce separate units of meaning which were then coded, categorised and 'clustered into themes' (Robson, 2011, p.375). This is key to any inductive approach to data analysis (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, pp.127-131) and an important second stage of analysis to discover whether co-curating the Eucharist with children is important to spiritual flourishing.

7.5.2 Constant comparative thematic analysis

The primary themes of discipleship, power and eucharist were drawn from the literature research. These are shown in the trunk of the Conceptual framework tree shown in Figure 2 on page 63. I contend that these are not theories being tested but theoretical concepts found in the literature that provided foundational themes for the data analysis. Using a constant comparison approach with discipleship, power and eucharist as starting points still left the enquiry open to emerging theories, concepts or the discovery of a central core category (Robson, 2011, p.489).

The approach is related to grounded theory, which Robson states, begins where 'the researcher forms initial *categories* of information about the phenomenon being studied from the initial data gathered' (2011, p.149). However, such an approach acknowledges a problem in using grounded theory, that: 'it is not possible to start a research study without some pre-existing theoretical ideas and assumptions' which may be assumed by this research approach (2011, p.148). Having identified conceptual themes a constant comparative method of data analysis of these themes was a logical step. I categorised the data at these primary nodes until saturation point was reached where no further comments could be found in the data relating to

discipleship, power and eucharist. The second stage was to work with the data grouped at each thematic primary node to identify sub-categories. The data was further categorised at these until no further sub-categories could be found. The findings from the thematic analysis of data is presented in Chapters' 9 - 11.

I used NVivo, a computer software package, to thematically code the data. NVIVO aims to provide for inductive research analysis a helpful means of unearthing relationships within data. It specifically provides a tool for inductive / qualitative researchers to use for data analysis and, according to Gibbs (2002, p.xxiii) 'encourages exploratory approaches' and also encourages 'a constant playing with ideas and data.' This was my experience. Creating node trees of related codes enabled the discovery of categories at the heart of the data and a unifying concept. As part of the process of enquiry numbers within tables were used to make comparisons between data sets to show the size and scope of the various data sets. This did not violate a qualitative method. Robson cites Miles and Huberman (1994) in presenting a range of tactics for researchers to use to analyse and present their qualitative data, including counting. Counting is entirely consistent with an inductive approach as one aspect of generating meaning and 'helps to see what's there by counting the frequency of occurrence of occurrent events' (Robson, 2011, p.484). The basic epistemological philosophies on which an inductive approach was based remained unaltered.

After the process of coding and categorising to interpret the data, the conceptual framework and my own voice were brought into play through the journal records, to provide a richer layer of analysis. The conceptual findings are presented in Chapter 12. I have been mindful throughout the process of data collection and analysis to convert and graft my research journey 'into the service of theological action' (Swinton and Mowat, p.259). Reflexivity has enabled me to find and recognise my points of entry into the coded material (Etherington, 2004, p.227).

Summary

In this part of the thesis I have presented my research design and fieldwork. The examination issues, questions and methods presented here were the vehicle by which I investigated whether co-curating the Eucharist with children is important to the spiritual flourishing of the church. PAR was the means by which I conducted the

investigation. This method also achieved my second objective, that all those who took part would gain something from the experience: that it has provided 'an opportunity for growth and learning for both researcher [*and her co-researchers*] as well as for the wider community' (Etherington, 2004, p.78).

I have also demonstrated how, in using PAR, the recruitment process and the fieldwork were conducted. Part 4 will focus on the presentation of key findings through a detailed analysis of the data collected.

Part 4 Analysis of data

Introduction

In Part 2 I presented four theoretical perspectives which offer an alternative mode of understanding and practice based upon a model of child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. From the theoretical perspectives I drew the key conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist to develop an integrated conceptual framework. The framework summarises the mental image of the themes and patterns that have emerged from literature and my context and experience. It accompanies the chosen methodology and informs the research method and design. Part 3 showed how the integrated conceptual framework informs that methodology. The fieldwork consisted of two stages: stage 1 at St O followed by stage 2 at St E. Each stage followed the same pattern of a phase A where the co-researchers attended the Eucharist without its co-curation with children and a phase B where the children taking part as researchers co-curated the Eucharist.

In Part 4 of the thesis I give an evidence-based account of what can be learnt from the research enquiry following a qualitative analysis of the data through a form of narrative enquiry. The chapters that follow present an analysis of all the raw data gathered in both stages (St O and St E) together as phase A without and phase B with co-curation.

Chapter 8 presents a holistic narrative analysis of the findings of the co-researchers. In Chapters 9-11 I present the findings from a thematic analysis of the empirical data using Nvivo software. The analysis involved a sequential narrative approach using the conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist as primary nodes in a constant comparative method of coding and categorising the data. The data was segmented into units of meaning and coded at each primary node until no further examples of discipleship, power and eucharist could be found. The next stage was to analyse the new primary data sets by looking for categories within these until again, no more could be found and the data was coded at these categories.

A mixed method of presenting the analysis of the data is used. Direct speech is employed to present the experiences of the respondents. A bracketed number notation is used at the end of each comment to show the anonymised code for that respondent. Tables are used to show the categories found from coding and comparative summaries of the data without and with co-curation and by child, community and adult groups. My journal entries provide an additional commentary.

Together, the findings arrive at the ‘thick description’ of a research phenomenon advocated by Swinton and Mowat (2006, p.123). The final chapter in this section explores attentive presence as a unifying concept emerging from the raw data.

Chapter 8: The co-researchers' findings

The findings in this chapter have been drawn from a narrative analysis of summaries produced from the raw transcripts of each group session. I acknowledge that in summarising the words of others the new texts produced have inevitably involved a process of mediation. However, the summarised accounts were returned to the co-researchers to discover the accuracy of the story they told. In this way the co-researchers were able to arrive at as faithful account an account as possible of their experiences of co-curating the Eucharist with children.

8.1 The co-researchers' summaries

A first step was to gather the co-researchers' findings in the form of summaries of what each group said in response to the four themed questions of: importance; feelings; involvement and closeness to God in The Eucharist. Following each group session I produced a summary of the transcripts and these were read and discussed by the relevant group at a further meeting to assess their veracity. The groups decided on what changes were needed so that the summary reflected what they wanted to say from their experiences of the Eucharist both without and when it was co-curated with children. In total we had gathered six stories of how the Eucharist was experienced: three for St O and three for St E. The full summaries are presented in Appendix 8.

When each researcher group fed back to the other two groups from their church in a joint meeting, the children and adults listened carefully to the summaries presented by each group and a discussion followed. At each joint meeting I put the same supplementary question to the groups of researchers: 'I wonder if there is anything that has surprised you in the feedback from the other groups you have heard?' They all expressed surprise at the degree of equanimity between congregation, community and child participants shown in their findings. In particular, contrary to their expectations, there was no negativity or dissent about the Eucharist or the style of worship they found in each church.

The final piece of work for the co-researchers was to agree a common summative report. These were presented as written reports to the relevant PCC. It has been a key element of this research enquiry that the findings the church councils of St O and St E received would be those of the co-researchers. Their voices, not mine would effect change in practice.

8.2 Researchers' feedback

The co-researchers did not present their findings in person to the relevant PCC. The summaries were received as written reports as follows:

To the St O PCC

We would like children to continue to help make the worship happen. It seemed very natural, the way the children just slotted in to the worship at St O and that it really worked. The children have cherished this opportunity and 'stepped up to it'. Some of us said it recalled, that serving in church as children was important to our own early journey in faith. It made us feel special and deepened the worship.

We would like to go further and for children to be seen to be responsible enough to do the serving roles rather than just shadowing someone else. We would also be very happy if children taking part could wear something too.
We felt that no other church in the area offers this special way of children taking part and that by involving children in a different way St O should be known for being welcoming and very inclusive for children but not 'happy-clappy'. If people knew that if they dropped in their children would be invited to come and help in this way then St O would get a really good response.

We felt that the welcome given to children by inviting them to be at the centre of worship is helpful in preparing others in the congregation to join in, particularly newcomers and those with disabilities: that everyone is welcome to come forward to gather for Holy Communion. That in children being made to feel important and their being at the centre helps others to feel important too.
Some of us felt that seeing the children at the centre of worship made it more beautiful and that their natural style made it more beautiful.

We all felt that children helping to make the worship happen is an important piece of work. The children felt important, special and responsible but also that what they were doing was fun. The adults felt it was important to see their children or other children being welcomed to do this important work but also that they were doing it on equal terms.

To the St E PCC

Community Researchers Summary

Worship without children helping to make it happen: We felt that receiving communion, receiving blessings and sharing the Peace were important to us. At these times we felt we were coming together as one, like a family, and that we were accepted. We felt it to be a very peaceful time and that everyone was there for the same reason. We had feelings of peace, a sense of being part of something bigger, of being part of a family and of being refreshed by the worship. We felt the worship was different to our everyday lives and that was a good thing. It gave us something more. One of us felt empowered by the worship. Some of us felt involved in Communion, the smiling faces in the Peace and the singing, and the prayers as they reminded us that we are part of something bigger. Some of us felt lost with the books and that it seemed everyone else knew what they were doing and we didn't. Some of us loved the all age service and felt really involved and part of something all the time. We found having the screen very helpful. Some of us came close to God in the prayers and for some, being at the altar was very special.

Worship with children helping to make it happen: We felt children being alongside the servers and the priest was really special. We saw the pride and joy and sense of achievement on the children's faces. It was very important to see a child understanding things at the altar and reading to the congregation as well. Seeing children wanting to do things and learn about God was very important to us. We liked seeing children getting involved and bringing a sense of wonder to the worship. Seeing children involved opened up and interpreted the worship for us. We felt it brought us closer to others in church. Seeing children making the worship happen made us feel really positive about the whole thing, because if the children are present in worship God's not going to be forgotten in generations to come because the children will carry it on. It made us feel that the children were welcomed and really part of church. We felt the children were valued. This was very different to our experience of church as children. We liked that the children didn't seem inhibited by taking part in processions and being alongside adults. We found we were more involved when children were helping to make the worship happen. We felt closer to everything and paid more attention to what everyone was doing. Children do things in a different way to adults and they are less self-conscious and this made us more involved. We felt the children helped us to draw closer to God as we watched what they were doing and the way they did their actions amplified our experience of God.

We would like children helping to make the worship happen continue because the whole worship is more intergenerational and we can all learn about God and experience him through each other: young and old. We felt that for the children it was a massive achievement.

Congregation Researchers Summary

Worship without children helping to make it happen: For us, receiving the bread and the wine is very important. One of us thought the Confession very important too. We also thought that singing and the choice of hymns is very important to our experience of worship. The feeling of being part of the church family is also important to us. We thought that services made us feel better, refreshed and more positive. The worship gives us time to reflect and you are given just what you need at that time. One of us feels joy when singing but also worries quite a lot about how things will be. Another likes it when a sermon makes sense of a bible reading. Another sometimes feels anxious about how the children will be in church and what others will think. We feel really involved when giving the Peace but some of us would prefer to just share it with those around us because it becomes very complicated with so much movement around the church. One of us feels involved in the prayers and another when in the role of server because she feels more focussed. We feel that having a specific role helps you to be more involved though some tasks can be a distraction like being responsible for the music. One of us feels that she is involved by being present in the worship because she is offering something. One of us feels the pain of not being able to hold the chalice anymore because they can't control it. We feel that we come close to God and God comes close to us in singing the Holy Holy, in coming to receive Communion, particularly in going to the altar rail, and during the communion hymn afterwards. The lighting effects on the figure of the risen Christ to create the symbol of the Trinity is also a helpful focus in feeling the closeness of God. The sermon and readings can also draw us closer to God.

Worship with children helping to make it happen: We noticed that children were present with the altar party. Some of us thought they were not a distraction to our worship but one did feel her eyes were drawn to the children when they were fidgeting. We thought it was good to see from their faces that the children were enjoying it and it was helpful to our worship to see this. It was good to see the

children so interested in what they were doing. Those of us who serve found that at times the children were helping us rather than the other way round. It became a partnership. It felt perfectly natural as though it happened every Sunday and we would be very happy for it to continue. It was moving seeing the children with their candle. Some of us who were working with the children felt more relaxed, and felt moved when the children took the lead and helped us. For those of us in the congregation our feelings didn't really change. There were no negative feelings. If anything we would have welcomed the children doing more. It felt so natural for the children to be there and close to us at Communion. It just seemed like a normal service for some of us and didn't change our involvement but it was good to see the children were obviously enjoying it. For others of us the worship felt enhanced. It felt heart-warming that all of the children were involved and were focused on what was going on and for the servers this helped them to feel more involved in the worship experience. One of us felt closer to God at Communion because a child was alongside those distributing the bread and the wine. They felt it would have been quite natural for the child to have given this. Another of us thought it felt more like the family of God, that we were one family, especially when we prayed together with the children in the vestry beforehand.

Child Researchers Summary

Our experiences of being in the congregation: Some of us thought the most important part of the service was Holy Communion. We also thought the whole service was important because there were new things to learn. Being part of a community was important. We thought the All Age service made us feel part of something, like we fitted in, that it was exciting and we were learning things. In the worship on other Sundays we sometimes felt bored during the readings but also happy in the singing and in Holy Communion. The feeling was like being closer to church and more part of it. One felt a bit scared at the time of Holy Communion because they didn't know whether to go and receive or not so they didn't. Next time they would like to. Another felt the singing was a bit boring but felt happy the rest of the time. Some of us liked creating the scene in the desert as part of the sermon. It helped us to understand. One of us felt part of things when receiving the bread and the wine, others when sharing the Peace and others that they didn't feel left out at all

and felt there was something new to learn each service. Some of us felt closer to God in receiving Holy Communion and in receiving a blessing, another that they came closer to God through being with the people, another when we did the Peace and another when hearing the bible readings.

Our experiences of helping to make the worship happen: One of us felt important being with the person preparing the table and seeing the bread broken because they were close to where it was happening and learnt how things were done. Others of us felt important in receiving the bread and the wine and when praying to God. For one of us it brought back memories of going to church with their aunty. We felt it was important being light bearers. Being a light bearer to help make the worship happen made us feel part of something, that the whole of us was involved. We were comfortable and not scared. We were happy in being with people who helped us and we could talk to them and trust them. We could understand more of how the service happens. It made us feel proud and it was a good feeling to be told we were doing a good job. We really enjoyed the singing. It was special being close to people when they were receiving the bread and the wine. Some of us felt closer to God when receiving bread and wine, when receiving the flowers and doing things with others. One of us thought that stepping up to bow was like bowing to God, like giving a gift to him and sometimes receiving a gift. One of us said it felt like stepping into the village where Jesus was and where he died, like being in Jesus's space. One of us said they felt proud seeing their sister from Sunday School come forward to talk about what she had made. Another said that being in church felt like God is looking after their Granddad who died, and that he is in safe hands. We enjoyed helping to make the worship happen and we would like to do it again so we can learn more of what happens in church to make the worship happen and how the jobs work and to get to know the people more. This is what we learnt at church.

The reports' findings were formally accepted by each PCC.

8.3 Narrative analysis

When the summaries were completed I analysed the content using a holistic analysis approach focusing on insights and understandings. I compared and contrasted each summary for similarities and differences. I considered the effects of background

variables with regard to age (child and adult researcher groups) and the level of experience of the Eucharist as it is practised in my churches (congregation and community groups). I identified content that illustrated themes, insights, and understandings of the Eucharist when it was and was not co-curated with children. Four broad themes from the narrative analysis of the summaries emerged:

1. Co-curating the Eucharist with children was thought to be a good thing and should be continued.
2. Services that included the receiving of holy communion[6] were welcomed.
3. The responses to the questions made many references to liturgical action.
4. In the responses the theme of community and the church family featured prominently.

The key headline findings were drawn from an analysis of six different participating groups with their own defining contexts. One outcome is the degree to which all the groups articulated their experiences through references to the act of receiving holy communion, to liturgical symbols and action and to a sense of community. The centrality of holy communion to the acts of worship experienced was understandably felt by members of congregations used to that style of worship. The prior views of the adults unused to services containing holy communion, or with liturgical actions, did not appear to colour their responses, even though some of them inevitably came with their own preconceived opinions. These did bubble to the surface but only to reflect what they missed in the worship they attended elsewhere or had missed from an earlier time. In the Eucharist as practised at St O and St E the community adults found things of importance, that evoked strong positive feelings, involved them and drew them close to God. It also became clear that in the responses of all the participants liturgical action featured prominently. This may be because it is easier to refer to something seen or acted. The Eucharist is a liturgical act of worship. Actions dramatise the liturgy. What is interesting is the degree of importance of these actions to the participants. They provoked strong feelings, enabled greater involvement and evoked feelings about God.

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[6] The term the Eucharist describes an act of worship which contains the consecration and reception of bread and wine.

The responses of the child co-researchers were as I expected from my own experiences of worship with children. Even in phase A of the field work, where the children only participated as members of the congregation, they talked about the importance to them of holy communion. After they had experienced being active participants in the curatorial of the Eucharist they were able to express a theology of the Eucharist that many adults find difficult to put into words, talking quite naturally about receiving Jesus through the bread and the wine.

The fourth key finding has a more abstract quality. The sense of community or of being part of a family could be ascribed to the participation in any act of worship, eucharistic or not. In churches we often think of familial qualities in relation to hospitality or the welcome received at the door or afterwards over coffee, particularly to newcomers. Although the welcome received did feature in the responses of the two community groups it is clear from their data that a strong theme emerged about community and family within eucharistic worship at St O and St E. The sense of family and belonging was more pronounced in phase B of the research. The co-researcher findings show two clear reasons for this. The first is that by experiencing the presence of children at the centre, people in the congregation also felt more included. The second was from the parent co-researchers seeing their children welcomed and included. In both sets of groups there was affirmation of the eucharistic worship the community researchers experienced.

It is also clear from the group summaries that the more intense feelings were felt by those closest to the centre of worship. One of the four St O group and two of the four St E group were servers in their churches. This meant that they were actively involved in the co-curation of the eucharist with children.

Following this stage of the research I returned to the raw data to work on a thematic analysis using a constant comparative method. These findings are presented in the following three chapters.

Chapter 9 Key findings: the theme of discipleship

In Chapter 4 I presented discipleship as the first conceptual theme drawn from the literature research (Chapter 3) as foundational for an integrated conceptual framework for research. I described the journey of discipleship as belonging, becoming and believing that informs a pilgrim model of child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. Broadly speaking these characteristics of discipleship can be discerned thus:

- Belonging is a relational characteristic evidenced in comments relating to being part of something with others or feeling part of a community.
- Becoming is a transitional or threshold characteristic evidenced in comments relating to a more active participation in worship or the worshipping life of the community. Becoming is also on the way to a personal relationship with God.
- Believing is the characteristic to describe that personal relationship with God that we know as faith or as having a faith.

Belonging, becoming and believing descriptors were used as the primary nodes for a thematic analysis of the conceptual theme of discipleship without and with co-curation with children. The nodes provide evidence of where the data reveals forms of discipleship according to these characteristics.

9.1 Phase A findings without co-curation

Using a constant comparative saturation method and Nvivo software as the analytical tool I unitised 172 references to discipleship in the data relating to the worship at St O and St E without co-curation with children. Table 9.1 shows the 22 different categories found amongst this data set. Once coded the data sources in the Discipleship Family Tree were grouped under the primary nodes or headings of belonging, becoming and believing. The belonging phase shows the greatest number of discipleship categories that were found. In total there were 78 coded references to belonging, 35 to becoming, and 59 to believing. The big categories were informed by a pilgrim model of discipleship where the direction of travel begins first with a sense of belonging. I found nine different categories that could be attributed to a sense of belonging. In this model of discipleship belonging leads to a sense of becoming, that is: becoming a Christian.

Table 9.1 Categories of discipleship found in the data set

	Belonging	Becoming	Believing
Experience of…	1. Being welcomed 2. Feeling comforted 3. Meeting a need 4. Being cared for 5. Happiness 6. Interaction 7. Peacefulness 8. Sense of family 9. Togetherness	10. Welcoming others 11. Caring for others 12. Praying for others 13. Learning something/ more 14. Having a role 15. Making connections 16. Awareness of tradition	17. Presence of God 18. Closeness to God 19. Relationship with God 20. Sacred space 21. Awe, wonder, mystery 22. Transformation or change

Becoming might be expressed by undertaking a role, doing something for others or by feeling more informed about the faith. I found seven different types of response that could be categorised as becoming.

The pilgrim journey leads to a deepening experience of belief in God and feelings of being changed by the experience. I found six different types of response relating to belief. There may be many other types of response that could be described as belonging or becoming or believing but in the analysis of this data saturation point was reached at 22 different categories.

This analysis was only concerned with belonging, becoming and believing evident in a data set provided by co-researchers from the experience of the Eucharist as it is practised at St O and St E. The categories are not exclusive. Any of these might be found in other types of worship and at other times altogether. For example, at the introductory meetings with each group, in order to prepare the co-researchers for the sessions when they would be talking about their experiences of worship, I asked them to think about a favourite place. I used the starter questions of importance, feelings, involvement and sense of God to help the participants explore their favourite place.

Before presenting the findings relating to each group type it is important to note that although the pilgrim model of discipleship describes a journey and a forward direction of travel, the different parts of the journey may be experienced at any time, and at the same time, regardless of how much time in a life has been spent in exploring the Christian faith.

9.1.1 The children

An analysis of the data collected from the child groups without co-curation showed categories of belonging as an aspect of discipleship. Comments related to experiences of togetherness:

> '…a part of something, like I fitted in' (26)
> 'I was there with a lot of people doing something together, and we were all a part of it' (10)
> '…like part of the like prayer' (11)

The comments focussed on the more interactive times of the service such as sharing the Peace and receiving holy communion. These examples of togetherness are linked to their descriptions of feeling happy. Happiness as a feature of belonging was shown in comments such as:

> '…relaxed and happy… maybe happy because I'm being, I'm talking about God or just joining in' (11)
> '…but when I did the singings, and the communion, I felt happy. And I felt happy because it made me like … feel… closer to church' (26).

The comments came from children who were not active participants in the Eucharist and were offset to a degree by other comments about boring or incomprehensible parts of the service where they felt excluded. These are discussed in the following chapter with findings relating to the concept of power. Nevertheless, despite these comments all the children felt comfortable in the services without co-curation. There were also specific comments made by the children about inclusiveness in relation to eucharistic liturgy and practice and these are discussed in Chapter 11 in findings about the concept of eucharist.

I found the references to becoming related to times when the children felt more involved in the service and learning something. The feelings expressed by the children of wanting to be even more involved directly relates to a journey of discipleship. The desire to be more involved is even more apparent in their data relating to co-curating the Eucharist.

The children also made references to belief and felt able to talk quite freely about their experiences of God or in this case Jesus.

> 'actually it makes me feel very important, feel good and like I'm being like actually blessed from Jesus and something is going all over my body and stuff, … yeah' (8).

The children talked about God and Jesus interchangeably and without any differentiation.

9.1.2 The community adults

The data collected from the community adult groups showed a sense of belonging but not to the degree of the responses of the children. The different expressions of a sense of belonging between the child and community researchers may be explained by age and experience. Children have a natural openness to new things whereas adults have preconceived attitudes and prior experiences that will affect their responses. I was prepared for this outcome by one participant when I recruited her. She is a member of a church with an evangelical tradition where the usual practice is for intergenerational worship to be non-eucharistic and 'lively'. The participant hoped that by taking part she might make a contribution to a discussion of how St O might change its liturgical practice to be more welcoming. Although not having experienced the worship at St O herself she made a prior judgement about a lack of inclusiveness based upon its anglo-catholic tradition. She has three children and spoke before the research began of her concerns about their worship needs. Her experience of the worship at St O, however, was very different to her pre-conceived judgement.

> 'I found it very peaceful, and very welcoming. I felt very comfortable, surprising because I was quite…anxious isn't the word, but apprehensive, particularly because I knew that I'd got my small child with me and you know it could go either way, but I think that the congregation made me feel welcome so I was then able to appreciate the service' (5).

Like the children, feelings of being welcomed were experienced by the community adults and overrode feelings of apprehension or negativity. Another comment displayed very similar feelings. This participant brought her two children aged five and three and was heavily pregnant with her third:

> 'Coming here and looking at the congregation and thinking oh no they're going to hate the children, but by last week, I knew that they'd be fine and no-one batted an eye, and just let me get on and just listen, and again I felt peaceful, and … I don't know, maybe cause I'm a bit hormonal at the moment' (6).

The community adults also made comparisons with their other experiences of worship, further demonstrating a sense of belonging and even becoming, with the worship encountered at St O and St E.

> I've been to another church in the last year and it wasn't like that, we could have been anybody, it was that big it wasn't a personal thing. I didn't know who was doing the service. It was just, they could have been anybody, I could have been anybody. It's more of an important thing here than it was there (17)

Some participants spoke of a sense of belonging as being thought of as someone special.

> 'It feels special, I don't mean special better than anybody else, but special to you, you know' (18)
> 'They feel like they know you and they are really pleased to see you, and it makes my child feel at ease' (20).

Feelings of being at ease, special and welcomed are important features of a sense of belonging. These features of discipleship may be encountered in any community-centred worship. However, these feelings were experienced in the formal liturgical setting of the Eucharist by adults with preconceived resistances to this style of worship. Like the children, with little experience of the Eucharist, the community adults' sense of belonging was also communicated through references to communion, liturgical action and the Peace. These are explored in the eucharist findings.

9.1.3 The congregation adults

As might be expected, references to belief were shown strongly by the congregation co-researchers. These participants spoke about being changed and made better by their experiences of the worship.

> 'I think it's as you arrive you bring the world with you, your world; it might be like your breakfast being overcooked or ghastly traffic, and it takes you quite a while to push it out of the way. And the church changes you and you feel very uplifted by it' (4).

Many of the congregation comments went directly to the heart of the worship for them: the receiving of holy communion. Comments also reflected particular roles or jobs in the relevant worshipping community. All these participants reflected the faith journey as part of a church family, where, sooner or later, there is a move from belonging to becoming, demonstrated in a commitment to take on part of the responsibility of making worship happen. Roles that the congregation researchers held included reading the lessons, leading prayers, welcoming people, giving out books, taking the collection, and taking forward the bread and wine. Many of their comments reflected these roles. For some it was a joy to carry out their role, for

others, jobs also brought tensions that sometimes got in the way of their ability to worship. For example:

> 'I'm distracted … I don't feel the same after a service that I'm doing the music compared to a service where I'm not doing anything' (15)
> 'I agree that when you're a side person and that's part of the reason that I didn't volunteer, I was kind of volunteered, but actually, I felt quite good but the first time I wasn't sure, but I've warmed to it. I'm a side person' (3).

The comment from researcher (15) refers to the job of operating a CD player for the backing track to the hymns and is in response to another's comment about the spiritual difficulties of having a role. The second comment (3) is in response to another's comment that having a job can affect the experience of worship. These roles, borrowing a term from the theatre, are 'front of house' and very different from that of a curator of the curatorial of worship. Three of the participants are also servers at the altar which is a curatorial role. Their comments were wholly positive about their participation and are explored in the findings relating to eucharist (Chapter 11).

9.2 Phase B findings with co-curation

The data was coded at categories of discipleship gathered from phase B of the field work when the Eucharist was co-curated with children. In phase A 172 units of data were coded at discipleship whereas in phase B this increased to 270. All the co-researchers had much more to say about their experiences about the Eucharist co-curated with children. Table 9.2 shows a summative comparison, as percentages, of the total number of references gathered from all groups without and with co-curation.

Table 9.2 Experiences of discipleship without and with co-curation

	Discipleship	Belonging	Becoming	Believing
A. Without co-curation	172	20%	46%	34%
B. With co-curation	270	39%	48%	13%

In phase B the percentage of references to belief is much reduced. Belief is like a very slow growing plant, it develops over time. The co-researchers' experiences were recorded after only a few services. An increase would not be expected but there was a marked decrease. This may be accounted for in the increase in the percentage of

references to belonging. In the phase B feed-back sessions the child and community co-researchers were more animated about their feelings of being part of the worship. There were many more references to being part of something, togetherness, family and feelings of peace. The becoming stage of discipleship shows a very slight increase. Becoming characteristics are to do with taking a more active role in serving the community of worshippers such as welcoming, caring and praying for others.

9.2.1 The children

Of the data collected from the child researcher groups references to the primary node of belonging were categorised as togetherness, interaction and happiness. A child at St O talked about feelings of togetherness by being with a partner to help make the worship happen: 'When we did the Light Bearer I felt involved because we got to be with someone' (25).

The child researcher comments also showed several categories of belonging all rolled into one, for example having a role, learning and making connections. This child went on from speaking about understanding to talk about how she felt differently at different times:

> 'There were parts where I felt different 'cos there were parts where I forgot my light and I thought: oh no! I've made a mistake, but then I learnt that next time I will remember it. 'Cos when I was with Amy she says that we're going to go to … we're going to go now so you can pick up your light. And when we finished giving the holy communion she said we are going to go down and give someone the bread and wine' (11).

At the primary node of becoming there were references categorised as a sense of tradition and making connections. There were for example, seven references to learning. Learning about how the Eucharist is curated was found to be very important to the children. They spoke eagerly about wanting to learn and do more. Since taking part in the research this co-researcher has not only decided to become a server at St E but has also volunteered to be on the reading rota:

> 'I'd like to follow different people around so that I get to know the roles and what their job is and what they're doing in church and most of all if I don't know them then I could go round and meet them all and get to know them more' (26).

The child also spoke about how she learnt from working with her adult partner and shows that the adult is using inclusive language to guide and involve her. Another

younger researcher's response shows how helping to co-curate increased her understanding of how the worship works at St O.

> 'Being part of the services made me feel like I could understand more than I should ... like I understood more than when I last went to church 'cos it made me understand how a vicar does a service' (26).

It was however, the feelings of importance in having a role in helping to make the worship happen that dominated the responses of the children:

> 'The most important part that I was in was when me and my brother was like, in both the sides of you and we were like really serious and I was sitting near where the front was' (11)
> 'When we went round the church and everyone was looking at us and when you read out the book, I was standing beside you, and I felt quite important then because everyone was looking at me and everyone was quite close to me, so I felt quite important there' (12)
> 'That we had to walk around more and we had to like do a load of different stuff and we sit on those seats and we had to go right to the front in the middle to the big table and nobody else did that' (10).

The children's sense of importance conveyed their feelings of belonging as part of the journey of discipleship:

> 'It is like we already have a job' (8)
>
> 'If I was working, if I was standing up and doing the moving around I would be doing a piece but if I was just sitting down and seeing other people worshipping, I would still be as a piece but not as a bigger piece' (12).

Through being alongside another curator of the worship, and in the liturgical actions of reverencing the altar and preparing it for communion, co-curation helped the children experience a sense of the sacred. These units of data were categorised at the primary node of believing. This child expresses her feelings about God as giving and receiving a gift.

> 'Well I liked it when you step up and you bow, it feels like you are bowing at God, and you are and you're like, it feels like you are giving a gift to him. Sometimes you received a gift from God' (26).

This child drew a relationship between the work of co-curating and coming closer to God and the others present in the worship.

> 'When I had to do stuff like that it made me feel like I was coming more closer to God cause I was doing more stuff and I was helping more people' (10).

The comment from this child expresses feelings of being changed by the curatorial of worship.

> 'Its when we go to God, well not go to God, when we go to the bread and the wine and when we give peace because when we give peace its like shaking hands with God almost if you do it with your eyes closed, if you close your hands and do that its kinda nice. And when you go and have the wine and the bread its like ... its like eating Jesus' (8).

9.2.2 The community adults

Of the data collected from the community researcher groups when children were co-curating there were twice as many references coded as belonging compared to without co-curation with children. However, there was a striking difference between the St O and St E groups of community researchers in this phase. All the references categorised at the concept of discipleship were made by the St E researchers. There were no references that could be attributed to categories of discipleship made by St O community researchers.

There was a sense of disappointment felt by some of these St O researchers. They expressed the hope that children co-curating the eucharist would deepen their experience of worship:

> 'Nothing negative about it at all but it was just I thought that it was going to deepen my worship experience, which it didn't' (5) and: 'Makes no difference, no. Sometimes it makes me think back to when I used to go to Sunday school and you think how you used to get involved' (7).

The participants at St O thought it good to see what the children were experiencing but co-curation with children had little effect upon their own sense of belonging to the worshipping community, becoming a disciple of Jesus or a deepening of their faith.

For the St E researchers it was a very different story. Of the 38 references to a sense of belonging 28 were categorised at feelings of togetherness or times of interaction. The difference between the two groups of community researchers may be partly accounted for by feelings of settling in or getting used to being at St E but at St O the community researchers had also by this point in the research attended several services.

The main reason for the difference can be accounted for in the difference in worship curation. Though the worship at both churches is eucharistic, with liturgical

action, a sharing of the Peace and the receiving of communion, at St E on the first Sunday of the month the curation of worship is closer to the people and a powerpoint and screen used rather than service and hymn books.

The worship incorporates opportunities for everyone to engage with the theme of the Sunday in ways other than listening, singing, reading and speaking aloud together. The liturgical action is also more visible in this service than on other Sundays at St E (and all Sundays at St O) where the high altar is used at the East end of the church. Most of the 59 references from St E researchers arose from experiences at one such service where everyone was invited to visit areas of the church to complete an action:

> 'It sort of amplifies it for me, what I'm feeling, they're feeling, you know, like the closeness to God and planting a seed and know that it's going to grow and now you've done the initial planting of the seed and now it's up to God to do whatever it is to make it grow and if it's going to grow or not' (17)
> 'In that first Sunday of the month we do a lot more, we do the sung Eucharistic Prayer with response in it' (18).

These responses suggest that the community researchers were experiencing being a part of the curatorial of the worship in relationship with others. The references to shared feelings (17) and the use of the second person (18) are discipleship indicators of belonging to the worshipping community and becoming part of something bigger than themselves.

9.2.3 The congregation adults

There were fewer references from the two congregation groups that could be coded at categories of discipleship, in contrast to the other participants. This may be explained by the habitual nature of their worship experience. For example, comments in the co-curation phase focussed more on what they saw or felt about the children than upon their own experiences of worship. For example:

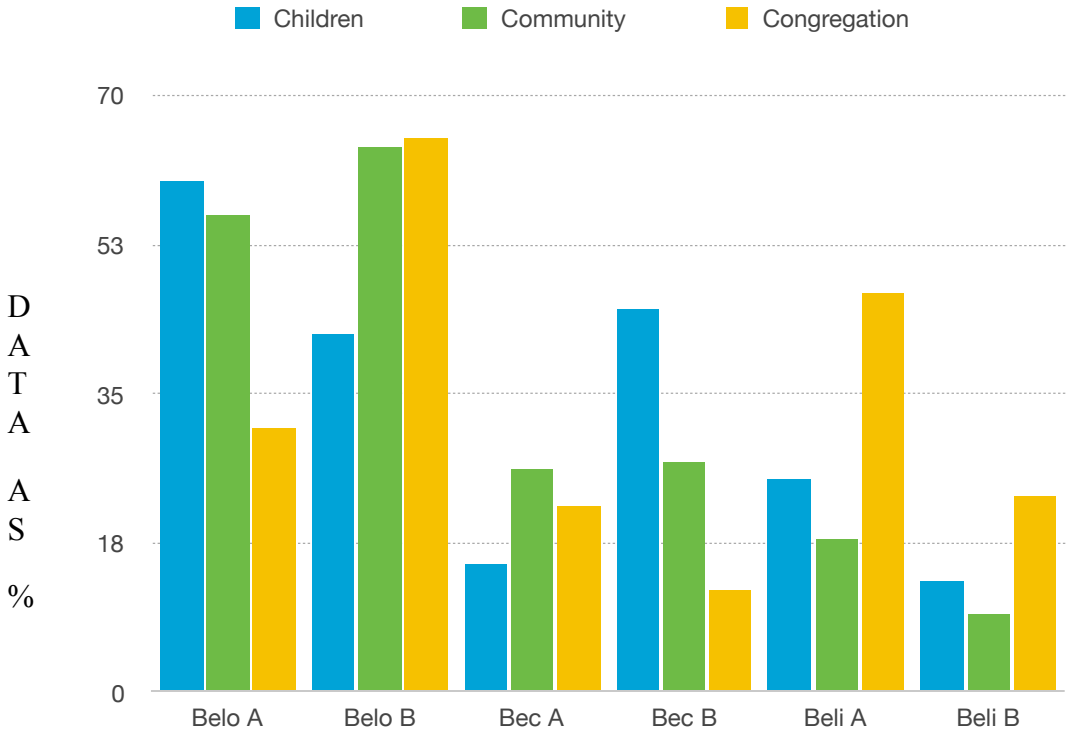
> 'I think it's part of children understanding, that what they are doing is special, that that is a sacred space' (2)
> 'I think the presence of God is there with all of us, no more so, or no less so with the children being there but as always as there is in a church' (3)

9.3 An evaluation

Analysing the data sample through a thematic analysis of discipleship: belonging, becoming and believing and the 22 categories found from coding at these primary

nodes has provided an important means of discovering evidence of discipleship amongst the participants. Table 9.3 summarises this comparison of the experience of worship without and with co-curation with children. The numbers represent the percentage of each group's set of data units (A and B) coded at the three themes.

Table 9.3 Comparison of all the discipleship data gathered in phase A and phase B



The data sets of researchers presented alongside each other show that the child researchers felt they belonged, even in phase A. Their sense of belonging was closely matched by the community researchers but ironically the congregation researchers did not show such a strong sense of belonging. This is an unexpected finding but may be explained by the focus remaining unchanged for these participants. They have felt part of church for many years.

However, in phase B the congregation participants' experience of belonging is shown to be markedly increased and closely matched by an increase in feelings of belonging expressed by the community participants. This indicates a finding that when children co-curated the adults felt a greater sense of belonging. These far outweigh responses that were coded as becoming and believing. There were also fewer references from the children that could be coded as belonging in phase B because their responses in this phase showed a discipleship journey that had moved to becoming.

The positive impact of co-curation on the discipleship of the children is a second finding from the research. Most of the child responses in phase B related to becoming part of the curatorial of worship through their roles but becoming part of the worship also helped them to talk about their role in relation to God.

I can understand the increased feelings of belonging of the adults through seeing children at the centre of worship helping to make it happen. Before beginning the fieldwork I spent a week in Taizé with members of my family. I recorded in my journal the following experience on our first day. It concerns the first common prayer of the day with the one hundred or so white-robed brothers of the community and three thousand visitors for the week, like us, all gathered in the church.

> 'I was overwhelmed with joy this morning seeing Brother Alois, the prior, walking through his brothers down to the East end of the church signalling the conclusion of the prayer. With him were all the children who had been sitting with him at the centre of the church taking part in the singing and the silence together. And there was my six year old granddaughter, striding confidently beside Brother Alois in her pink mac and wellies. My first visit in 1989 could have been yesterday. All those years ago it was her Father, sitting and walking with the founder of the community, Brother Roger.'
> (Journal 2, p.6).

Earlier in that service I had seen my granddaughter with a lit candle accompanying a brother as he distributed the bread. It was an intense experience for me of inclusion and communion. My experiences of the curatorial of worship at Taizé with children has been one of formation where my belonging, becoming and believing has been deepened and enriched by their presence helping to make the worship happen.

The congregation researchers' discipleship had been established over time and become rooted in a worshipping community of choice. Their discipleship was clearly demonstrated in the comments made in phase A of the fieldwork when the Eucharist was not co-curated with children. In phase B the congregation participants' main concern was whether the children affected the worship they were used to experiencing. A sense of having to change or make way to accommodate children at the centre of worship was differently experienced by those researchers sitting in the congregation to those who had roles in curating the liturgy. For those seated in the congregation the presence of children made little difference to their experience of worship but their comments related to what they could see of the children. They were

looking for signs of enjoyment in the children or in one case for a participant, whether the children stood out or got in the way. For the three congregation researchers who were also servers at the altar the data shows that partnering their role with a child in co-curation deepened their experience of worship.

Among the data gathered from the community researchers when the worship was co-curated with children I found a greater sense of belonging when the adults were also given opportunities to engage actively in the worship. The invitation to enter into the experience of worship more deeply by sowing a seed, tying a ribbon and lighting a candle as symbolic references to the theme of solidarity in creation, and doing these actions alongside children, intensified their feelings of belonging and becoming. For the first time also, I was able to categorise some of their comments as belief.

The evidence I have presented from an analysis of the conceptual theme of discipleship shows that it is the children who benefitted significantly from co-curating the Eucharist and benefitted more than the community and congregation co-researchers. There is no knowing whether the characteristics of discipleship shown in experiences of belonging, becoming and believing will stay with the children but this research enquiry was not designed to discover that.

Chapter 10 Key findings: the theme of power

The first key finding when the Eucharist was co-curated with children is that the children experienced a deepening of their spiritual formation evidenced in their sense of becoming when compared to their previous experiences when not part of the curatorial of worship. The second conceptual theme drawn from the four theoretical perspectives that I have employed in a thematic analysis of the raw data is power. A theoretical discussion of power was discussed in Chapter 4.

Discipleship is closely related to power. As feelings of belonging intensify and lead to becoming more involved in the worshipping life of the community so do feelings of empowerment. Again, employing a constant comparative saturation method and Nvivo software as my analytical tool, I unitised the data, this time focussing upon the conceptual theme of power. I expected this second analysis to be linked to the first as positive experiences of power would naturally correspond to feelings of belonging, becoming and believing. Where power was experienced negatively I would also expect to see little evidence of discipleship formation.

It became apparent during the categorisation process that all the data references unitised as power could be described as either examples of empowerment, or disempowerment or neutral, that is, unaffected by the worship, people or surroundings. I employed these as primary nodes until I reached saturation point at 17 categories (table 10.1).

Table 10.1 Categories of power found in the data set

	Empowerment	Disempowerment	Neutral
Experience of…	1. Familiarity 2. Peace 3. Freedom 4. Holy Spirit 5. Being helped 6. Fresh start 7. Involvement 8. Feeling well/calm	9. Unfamiliarity 10. Fear 11. Control 12. Lack of God 13. Feeling alone 14. Disengagement 15. Feeling disenfranchised 16. Feeling uneasy/tense	17. … a state of being neither empowered or disempowered

As I listed the categories it also became apparent that I was producing pairs of categories. Where I found an example of empowerment in the raw data there was also an example of its opposite disempowerment. For example, I found an experience of involvement but also one of being disenfranchised:

> ‘When we did the light-bearer I felt involved because we got to be with someone’ (25).
> ‘they were reading too quickly as well and I couldn’t keep track’ (24).

10.1 Phase A findings without co-curation

There were 83 references to the conceptual theme of power in the data relating to the worship at St O and St E when it was not co-curated with children. I found categories such as feelings of peace, control, freedom and fear. I also found references in the data to spiritual power or, from a Christian perspective, the power of the Holy Spirit. Of the 83 references I was able to categorise 40 as empowerment, 34 related to disempowerment and nine that I categorised as neutral references to power.

10.1.1 The children

Of the data collected from the child researcher groups there were eight coding references to power. Of these 50 per cent related to feelings of empowerment and 50 per cent to disempowerment. There were no neutral references. The concept of power in relation to children is difficult to apply (as discussed in Chapter 4, p.61). It is significant that references that could be categorised as empowerment in phase A related to where the children were invited to become involved. At St O this was a Harvest Festival service where they were involved by bringing forward symbolic gifts of the harvest:

> ‘…’cause it was just the fact that everyone was looking at me and like I was really important in the parade and like as I was part of the parade. I was, I felt more like proud of myself, yeah it was like me like taking a snapshot in my head and then me remembering it again’ (8).

At St E during the sermon the children were invited to explore the account of Jesus being tempted by the devil in the wilderness in their own way. They were given some objects and sand.

> ‘I thought that maybe if I played in the sand it might help me to understand more the actual things that you are saying’ (23).

It was also interesting that the references to disempowerment all came from the child researchers at St E. Feelings of not understanding, nervousness and doing something they did not want or feel ready to do were recorded.

'Sometimes when you do the readings you can't really hear the words that are supposed to stand out' (23).
'I felt a bit scared because my tummy was like all 'puffy' when we had the bread and the wine and I didn't know what to do, whether to go up and have some wine or not, so I ended up not going up' (25).
'I didn't want to go up but I had to' (24).

The differing responses in relation to power from the two child researcher groups may be accounted for by differing prior experiences. At St O two of the children regularly attended the Tuesday evening Eucharist with their parents and the others were used to being in church with their parents in a neighbouring church in the evangelical tradition. Their prior experiences of church were very different from the child researchers at St E where two of the children attended the Sunday School. Their parents did not come to church and the children rarely worshipped with the adult congregation in the Eucharist. The other three children were new to St E and to church worship. Feelings of power, empowerment or disempowerment I contend, directly relate to how well we know a situation. I expected that being familiar and comfortable with the church building, the congregation members and the worship would have a direct bearing upon feelings of empowerment.

10.1.2 The community adults

Of the data collected from the community researcher groups without co-curation there were 39 coding references to power. Of these 49 per cent related to feelings of empowerment, 46 per cent to disempowerment and 5 per cent were neutral references. The community researchers' responses were clearly coloured by their prior experiences in terms of both empowerment and disempowerment. Feelings of empowerment were shown for example, in a familiar smell.

'A smell, a perfume that you've worn when you were very young you'll often associate with that time when you wear it 20 years on. And you can do that with smell and incense, I love the smell of it anyway and it is very strong at this church…but it takes me back to my childhood when all churches were a bit more high church, even the ones that weren't high church were a bit more structured, yeah, and a bit less happy-clappy and I felt that was nice because I like that tradition, it takes me back' (5).

The relationship between empowerment and belonging as a characteristic of discipleship is found in the participant's recollection. The smell of incense evoked feelings of nostalgia. In recalling feelings of loving the fragrance of incense from

going to church as a child she felt part of an earlier tradition and a sense of belonging to it.

The participant feelings of freedom or being free or being at peace I have also categorised as examples of empowerment. This example contrasts the time of being in church with all the things she has to do so that she can attend:

> 'I go out and I feel empowered on a Sunday and going home I have to go and look after my grandma and in 2 hours I have to get the house spotless before going to hers and do loads and loads of cleaning and tiding to do at hers. But it didn't bother me because it's like an exchange of power, I go in there with whatever I've got and you share the peace' (17).

The reference to an exchange of power is interesting. She brings her life as it is but in sharing the liturgical action of the Peace with others she puts down her burden of responsibilities in exchange for the peace she receives. Feeling at peace in turn empowers her to face the challenges in her life she describes.

Like the children's data, disempowerment found in the community adults' data also related to feelings of not being able to follow everything that was taking place. In particular in not being able to find their way around the service books and not being able to sing hymns they didn't know:

> '…looking through the pages trying to find where you are' (19).
> '…'cos I get lost on songs!' (17).

10.1.3 The congregation adults

Of the data collected from the church researcher groups there were 36 coding references to power. Of these 47 per cent related to feelings of empowerment, 33 per cent to disempowerment and 20 per cent were neutral references. It might be natural to suppose that regular attenders at St O or St E would feel empowered by their experiences. The desire to want to feel better when you leave than when you arrive is a compelling motivation. Other motivations for regular attendance are concerned with the social aspects of corporate worship such as feelings of being part of a family and meeting up with friends.

> 'I think sharing it with people that you know as well … it's better than … it has more effect if I do it here than if…I went to St O once, more out of curiosity than anything else, but it just wasn't the same. And it's essentially the same service, but because I only know one other person, it didn't have the same impact' (13).

The co-researcher here is describing a form of disempowerment in not being able to engage in worship at St O where she doesn't know anyone, yet at St E she feels part of a family. There were also comments from the church researchers concerned with spiritual empowerment, which would also be expected from committed church members: 'The power of the Spirit is awesome, it created the universe and almost wrecked it on occasions, and yet here we are and that power is within us' (4). However, these were tempered by feelings of frustration tied to things not working or running as smoothly as they wanted, or to change, or about the commitment of their role getting in the way of their desire to worship.

> 'One thing that hit me one Sunday, having brought the nave forward, the altar into the nave, the congregation just did not know having received the bread, had no idea to go left or right to receive the wine' (14).

For these congregation participants change to a usual way of doing things is an example of a negative experience that I have categorised as disempowerment. Another example echoed those of the community researchers in relation to their children. One church member felt disempowered by what others in the congregation might be thinking about her grandchildren.

> 'I do get very tense in church though because Sunday school, unfortunately, all seem to be my offspring, and when they are there I do feel as if everybody else is watching them, so I'm watching them, so I can't relax as much as when they are not there' (16).

10.2 Phase B findings with co-curation

There was a striking difference in the number of references that could be categorised as power from the data gathered of the researchers' experiences of co-curating the Eucharist with children. There were 232 references to power as compared to the first phase's 83 references. Of the 232 it was also striking that 189 references could be attributed to empowerment and only three references to disempowerment across the three groups of researchers. 40 references could be described as neutral.

Table 10.2 Experiences of power without and with co-curation

	Power	Empowerment	Disempowerment	Neutral
A. Without co-curation	83	48%	41%	11%
B. With co-curation	232	81%	2%	17%

Table 10.2 is a comparative summary of the figures as percentages at phase A and phase B. From these findings I deduce that the co-researchers found the Eucharist co-curated with children to be significantly empowering. I will show that this significant increase in empowerment is attributed to both the children's experiences of co-curating the Eucharist and the community researchers' experiences of seeing children involved.

10.2.1 The children

Of the data collected from the child researcher groups there were 101 coding references to power. Of these 98 per cent related to feelings of empowerment and only 2 per cent to disempowerment. All the child researchers were involved in co-curating the Eucharist in this phase. That so many of the comments made by the children could be categorised as power and examples of empowerment reflects their roles as light-bearers in the curatorial of the worship.

> 'Being part of the services made me feel like I could understand more than I should…like I understood more than when I last went to church 'cos it made me understand how a vicar does a service' (21).
> 'It made me feel part of something and happy and not like anxious and you can tell the people around you if something's wrong' (26).

What is also striking from the children's comments is the importance they felt from partnering an adult, learning from them and being a part of something bigger. Importance is directly related to feeling empowered. There were just two comments that could be categorised as disempowerment. One related to the feelings of a child researcher commenting on the behaviour of another child: 'I didn't like the bit where my cousin was messing around. I felt like when he was interrupting I lost my place with God' (21). The second related to trying the wine at communion for the first time: 'I enjoyed everything but the only thing I didn't like was the taste of the wine, it was a bit sour!' (26). Although categorised as disempowerment both examples also show commitment to the worship they were curating.

It was very evident from the child researcher group meetings how empowered they felt when co-curating the Eucharist. It was not just what they said but the animation and enthusiasm with which they expressed their experiences and shared them with each other. Many of the examples of empowerment found in the child researcher data set were in response to the starter questions about how involved and

how close to God they felt. These responses were categorised as spiritual empowerment, for example:

> 'I felt closer to God in every little bit of it, cos when you step into the church and it begins it feels like you've stepped into the village where Jesus was and where he died' (26).
> 'When I had to do stuff like that it made me feel like I was coming more closer to God 'cause I was doing more stuff and I was helping more people' (10).
> 'I felt like Jesus was near me and I was like Jesus' partner' (11).

When hearing these responses for the first time and then reading and reflecting upon them, I was struck how they resonated with my own experiences as a priest of curating the Eucharist with a child alongside. In my journal I wrote about an encounter with another priest in the Church of England who took a very different view to mine on the subject of children and the Eucharist:

> '…Two days ago I was joined by a priest who displayed so many of the priestly characteristics I dislike: an anglo-catholic "Father": paternalistic, dominant, exclusive. We share many things: an anglo-catholic parish, love of liturgy and the sacraments, but our approach to inclusion is very different. He is disapproving of children receiving communion. "The person needs to be old enough to make a sacramental confession - to know the difference between right and wrong. Children before the age of Confirmation don't have that capacity." I disagreed. He would not let someone other than a priest read the Gospel. He chooses (carefully) those who would come into the sanctuary to serve. Philip is a gatekeeper. He keeps out God's children unless he deems them worthy of being near the sacrament of bread and wine, or to receive. He says it is too precious. Here I agreed. I said for me also it was the most precious gift God can give. Because it is the most precious gift I want to give it to everyone just as Christ gave himself for everyone.'
> (Journal 2, pp.9-10)

It strikes me on re-reading this journal entry that this colleague's protectionist attitude about the Eucharist was born out of fear of what might happen. He doesn't trust the power of the Eucharist. I believe it is an inherent misunderstanding about the sacraments. It is not what the priest does but what God does in the sacrament.

10.2.2 The community adults

Of the data collected from the community researcher groups with co-curation there were 59 coding references to power. Of these 85 per cent related to feelings of empowerment and none to disempowerment while 15 per cent were references that showed participants felt neither empowered or disempowered. I categorised references to pleasure and a sense of wonder derived from seeing the children.

> ‘That is just what I was sort of looking for, a sense of wonder when you watch them’ (18).
> ‘I paid more attention, if that’s the right thing to say, I paid more attention with what was going on and where everyone was going. I was watching where each child was going more, it should take a child to get my attention, but it did’ (17).
> ‘It gives you that sense of wonder, with children, they don’t have the social things that adults do’ (20).

A clear finding from the data is that co-curation with children empowered those new to the worship at St O and St E. Their feelings of being drawn into the worship, of witnessing something they saw as beautiful happening before them deepened their own engagement and sense of inclusion. This can be attributed to the power or agency of the children. Though not realising their power themselves the children were agents for change in the growth of feelings of empowerment in the community adults. The children’s participation at the centre of worship increased the adult’s feelings of being accepted as part of the community, summed up in one community researcher response: ‘I must confess I wanted to go and do it’ (18).

10.2.3 The congregation adults

Of the data collected from the congregation researcher groups there were 72 coding references to power. Of these 56 per cent related to feelings of empowerment, 1 per cent to disempowerment and 43 per cent where the references showed that participants felt neither empowered nor disempowered. Like the congregation researchers’ sense of belonging and becoming discussed in the previous chapter the responses that could be coded as power, during the co-curating phase showed a large number of references with a passive response. The Eucharist co-curated with children had little effect in feelings of empowerment but neither did the congregation researchers feel alienated nor threatened by the presence of children at the centre of worship. It simply made little difference to their experience.

However, of the 40 responses categorised as empowerment the findings highlighted three significant positive changes to the worship experienced. The first change related to the impact of having a larger group of people co-curating the Eucharist.

> ‘I don’t know whether it’s because my head and my heart were involved but it was nice having them there and there was an enhancement … just being there’ (16).

> ‘It’s not the right word … no, I think I felt … that it was good. I thought it was good because it looked bigger … a bigger presence. And we on a Sunday here there aren’t always many people so it was quite a big presence and it’s working’ (4).
> ‘I think because it was echoed, because it was a child, it was kind of more wide-ranging, it wasn’t one dimensional, it was even bigger than that, so it reinforced the meaning’ (1).

These references to a bigger presence at the centre, that added something to the worship, were visual responses. Seeing something bigger was positive but it did not deepen their spirituality. The second change was also a visual impact: ‘I found it quite heart-warming to be honest, but all of the children that were involved were focused on what was going on’ (15). The third change demonstrating some feelings of empowerment amongst the congregation researchers was an emotional response: ‘There’s a sense of beauty about it. Almost brings a tear to your eyes almost, some of the moments’ (1). Another congregation co-researcher was also a server. Her experience was of being with the children.

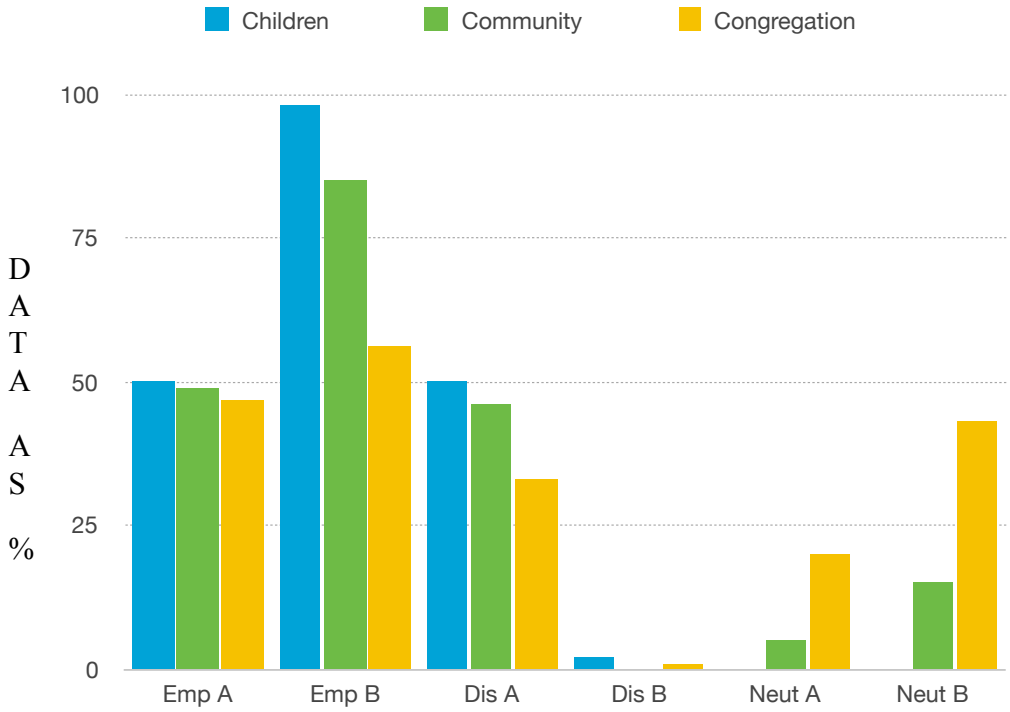
> ‘From my perspective the whole thing is completely amazing, the stillness up there, because I can see it from a closer view from where you’re sitting, the children are absolutely focussed on what is happening and the other significant thing, when I stand at the back sometimes when I’m the crucifer, when I’m receiving the plate, there is that palpable silence, and after the Eucharist, and during it you can hear a pin drop. And that seems to me something that these children have brought to us because I believe that they’ve got a huge spirituality and they really are focussed on what they are doing’ (3).

It is important to note that the impact of co-curation on the congregation researchers was much more deeply felt by those in the groups who were also part of the serving teams. These participants were directly involved in the curatorial of worship with children. Their experiences will be explored more fully in the Eucharist section.

10.3 An evaluation

Table 10.3 summaries and compares how power was experienced by the three groups of co-researchers without and with co-curation. The table shows a significant increase in feelings of power among the children when they co-curated. The community participants too showed a marked increase in feelings of empowerment in phase B. The congregation participants showed a slight increase. The children described co-

Table 10.3 Comparison of all the power data gathered in phase A and phase B



curating as real work. The analysis of data showed that for the adults who partnered the children in the curatorial of the worship it focused and intensified their experience of worship too.

Chapter 11 Key findings: the theme of eucharist

In Chapter 4 I described my use of the term eucharist as both the context for liturgical practice and a concept. It is the third key conceptual theme drawn from the perspectives: a pilgrim model of church; co-curation; experiential learning; and children's spirituality as relational. It is used in a thematic analysis of the data following the same method as for the analysis of discipleship and power conceptual themes. The findings show an analysis of the raw data categorised as eucharist that directly relate to the concept of discipleship formation in belonging, becoming and believing and the concept of power.

11.1 Phase A findings without co-curation

There were 102 unitised references to eucharist in the data relating to the worship of St O and St E without co-curation with children. Table 11.1 shows the finding of three primary nodes that all references belonged to.

Table 11.1 Categories of eucharist found in the data set

	Communion	Liturgical action	The Peace
Experience of…	1. Coming together 2. Receiving bread and wine 3. Receiving a blessing 4. Being at the altar	5. Incense 6. Processions 7. Breaking the bread 8. Bells 9. Singing the mass setting 10. Serving at the altar 11. Eucharistic Prayer 12. Candles	13. Giving the Peace 14. Receiving the Peace 15. Sharing in the Peace

The first node relates to communion where 58 references were found and from these, four categories to which all the units of data could be coded. The first two categories were experiences of coming/being together and experiences of receiving bread and wine as the formal act of communion. I also included the experience of blessing as this also happens in communion alongside others receiving a blessing or bread and wine. The last category found was being at or near the altar if the experience felt was being closer to others at this point.

The second primary node was liturgical action where 20 references were found and from these, eight categories: the use of incense; processions; the breaking of the bread; the ringing of bells at the consecration of the bread and wine; the

singing of the Mass setting (the Gloria, Sanctus and Agnus Dei); the words of the Eucharistic Prayer, references to candles and serving at the altar.

The third category was The Peace where there were 24 references to the experience of sharing the Peace with others, which is a key element of eucharistic liturgy. It comes midway in the service and marks a turning point from the Liturgy of the Word (readings, sermon and prayers) to the Liturgy of the Sacrament (preparing the table, the Prayer of Thanksgiving over the bread and the wine and the receiving of communion. The Peace (Christ's peace) is first given by the priest to the people and is followed by the invitation to share the Peace with one another. In some churches it is expressed as a short and simple turning to a neighbour and shaking their hand. At St O and St E this is taken literally and all those who are able move to share the Peace with one another. Those who stay in their place are also visited by everyone present. I categorised the experiences of the Peace as giving, receiving and sharing.

11.1.1 The children

Of the data collected from the child researcher groups there were 23 coding references to the Eucharist. Of these 78 per cent related to communion, none to liturgical action and 22 per cent to the Peace. The children focussed their experiences of the Eucharist in phase A upon the importance of receiving communion or a blessing.

> 'When I stepped up to get the wine and bread I felt that God was coming closer to me and I was coming closer to God and that he was giving it to me' (26).
> 'Having communion that did stick with me for like 5 million trillion days, that's kind of central to worship' (7).

The children found very quickly that the liturgy of the worship built up to the central moment of moving to receive. They were able to freely share their experiences of feeling close to God without seeing this as something bizarre or uncomfortable as adults might. The other time of movement in the service was the sharing of the Peace.

> 'When we did the Peace I felt like when I shook peoples hands I didn't really know very much but when I shake people's hands, when it's Peace time, I feel like I'm like giving the Peace to make people happy and doing it as part of service' (21).

> ‘Can I just say I do like it when we say the Peace, because when we’re shaking hands with the other people it feels like it, I don’t know how to say it, like when we shake each other’s hands, I don’t know how to say it’ (9).

It is also clear to see from these examples of the children’s experiences of sharing the Peace that this was a time in the service where they felt very involved.

11.1.2 The community adults

Of the data collected from the community researcher groups there were 36 coding references to eucharist. Of these 39 per cent related to communion, 28 per cent to liturgical action and 33 per cent to the Peace. The references gathered from the community participants showed that they were not put off by eucharistic liturgy. No one made a negative comment about the structure or content. This comment is from someone who usually attends an evangelical church where the eucharist is not the principal service.

> ‘For me it was communion, even though the service I came to was quite interactive with your salt and your fire, which I loved. But for me communion was the most important part of the service’ (5).

These participants had very little experience of worship at all. The dominant view in the wider church is that the eucharist is not the type of service that newcomers would be attracted to. They would feel alienated or put off by the formality of the liturgy. These newcomers did not find this to be so for them.

> I think communion is probably the most important part for me, I think it doesn’t matter who you are, an adult or a child or an elderly member, it doesn’t matter who you are anyone can go up. It’s like an acceptance, it doesn’t matter who you are, you’re equally as important as anyone else that might have been there for however many other years’ (17).
> ‘You get your own little moment and that’s what I like’ (7).
> ‘I felt quite involved in communion and the Peace, cos you can be quite involved yourself’ (19).

Their comments express the idea that this service is for anyone and that communion is central to the idea of Christian hospitality. The participants at St O also loved the use of incense: ‘and the table with the incense’ (7) refers to the liturgical action of the priest censing the altar by walking around it swinging a thurible or incense holder so that the fragrant smoke rises around it. Another commented on her child’s reaction: ‘The baby said that to me “the smoke, the smoke!” he liked it’ (5).

11.1.3 The congregation adults

Of the data collected from the church researcher groups there were 43 coding references to the Eucharist. Of these 61 per cent related to communion, 23 per cent to liturgical action and 16 per cent to the Peace. These co-researchers strongly expressed their feelings about receiving holy communion. Attending the Eucharist Sunday by Sunday, and for most of the participants once or twice during the week as well, has been key to their formation in the Christian faith.

> 'Yes I think that communion is the pinnacle for me, sort of thing, you know, receiving the bread and the wine' (2).
> 'From when I was young, I looked forward to being confirmed so I could receive. I was taught it is the body and the blood of Christ and that is what we come for, that is my faith' (14).

11.2 Phase B findings with co-curation

There were 63 coding references to the Eucharist in the data relating to the worship of St O and St E when it was co-curated with children. 20 references related to communion. There were 39 references to liturgical action and four references to the experience of sharing the Peace with others. Table 11.2 shows the percentages coded at A and B in relation to each other.

Table 11.2 Experiences of eucharist without and with co-curation

	Eucharist	Communion	Liturgical Action	The Peace
A. Without co-curation	102	57%	20%	23%
B. With co-curation	63	32%	62%	6%

The findings show significant differences of experiences without and with co-curation. The first relates to the total number of references made. In phase B when the Eucharist was being co-curated with children these were much lower. This may be accounted for in the different focus of experience. What is remarkable is that of the 63 unitised comments categorised as eucharist 45 were made by the children. Conversely, there were only six coded references made by the community researchers and 12 made by the congregation researchers.

11.2.1 The children

Of the data collected from the child researcher groups there were 45 coding references to the Eucharist. Of these 29 per cent related to communion, 64 per cent to liturgical action and 7 per cent to the Peace. Table 11.3 shows that these figures are significantly different to the earlier experiences of the children when they were not co-curating the Eucharist.

Table 11.3 Percentages of children's Eucharist experiences without and with co-curation

	Communion	Liturgical Action	The Peace
Without	78%	0%	22%
With	29%	64%	7%

What stands out in the data categorised in this phase is the children's focus upon liturgical action. When in the congregation they made no reference to the way the Eucharist was curated. This directly relates to the passiveness found in the analysis of power. In phase A there were also few references that could be described as empowerment or disempowerment. However, when the children were co-curating they were at the centre and central to the curatorial. Their comments show what the children are noticing but also discovering and learning.

> 'Yeah, and the person that carries the incense, holds the book up' (12).
> 'Actually … seeing a server setting out for when we were doing the bread and the wine and seeing you breaking the bread' (21).

The comments also reveal their desire to do more, enter more, into co-curating:

> 'You know if we do this again, instead of just having the candles can we like, if we were standing next to somebody carrying the cross, can we like have a little cross or something, and if we were standing next to the person with the candle can we like have a little candle and stuff like that?' (10).

The comments coded at liturgical action in particular, show the relationship between the conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist when children are part of the curatorial. The children's experiences of co-curating by being directly involved in the liturgical actions show not only a sense of belonging to the community but becoming disciples in taking ownership for their role. This is evidenced in their desire to want to develop it and make it their own. The children were empowered by

their experiences to direct how the worship experience for them could be even better. Of significance is that the children saw the potential of co-curation and were able to express a vision for its development.

11.2.2 The community adults

Of the data collected from the community researcher groups there were six coding references to the eucharist. Of these 33 per cent related to communion, 50 per cent to liturgical action and 17 per cent to the Peace. There were far fewer comments from the community researchers that could be categorised as eucharistic when compared to phase A. However, like the children, when seeing this data set alongside that for empowerment a possible answer is shown. The 50 references to empowerment from the community participants gathered in the co-curating phase points to a main focus of attention. The adults were drawn into and empowered by the presence of the children in the curatorial. This is the experience they wanted to share. Where there were comments that could be categorised as eucharistic the main focus was still the child's actions. One example was where a community member felt more drawn into the worship because of the light a child was carrying: 'I found the candle was focussing and that was quite moving really' (14). Another was seeing the joy in a child's face as she helped prepare the altar table with the bread and wine: 'The girl read out the bit about the bread and the wine, and she beamed, you could have seen light emitting from her, I'm sure' (16).

It is also interesting that the comments categorised were all from St E. At St O the group discussion focussed upon the children's evident enjoyment or experience of co-curation but the participants had nothing to add to their own experiences of the eucharist.

11.2.3 The congregation adults

Of the data collected from the congregation researcher groups there were 12 coding references to the Eucharist. Of these 42 per cent related to communion, 58 per cent to liturgical action and none to the Peace. Like the community adults, the congregation participants found that when the Eucharist was co-curated with children it made little impact upon their eucharistic experience. This accounts for the low number of references. However, where the data was coded at eucharist, apart from the

experience of one participant, it didn't detract from their experience either. These comments show a positive experience of co-curation:

> 'It does enhance the connection with God, you know. I've always felt it's important to me and as I say its through the Eucharist. But with the children there it does make the service more dimensional' (1).
> 'When we were having communion I would have been quite happy if the child had had given me the wine because it just felt natural for her to be there, and if she'd have had the chalice and given it to me and spoken the words I wouldn't have batted an eyelid' (13).

However, one participant felt uncomfortable about a child being alongside the president at the moment of consecration.

> 'She was shadowing you very much so wasn't she? When she was behind the altar and you'd got your arms out she'd got her arms out too and I thought, I don't know if I quite like that. I didn't feel comfortable with it at all. I thought that that's the priest's, that reverence, that's its you know, domain. Rightly or wrongly, but it crossed my mind, so I wasn't quite comfortable with that' (2).

It is an important finding to acknowledge that for congregation members seeing children in what they have come to value as sacred places and roles is unsettling. Participant 2 felt that the child was encroaching upon a function in the Eucharist that can only be undertaken by an ordained minister. This uncomfortableness rocks the foundations of understanding about the nature of priesthood. The purpose of this enquiry is not to explore the nature of priesthood but does relate to a wider doctrinal debate about priesthood and the priesthood of all believers[7].

11.3 An evaluation of the eucharist data

Table 11.4 shows a summative comparison as percentages of all the eucharist data gathered in both phases. The remarkable finding about the children's experiences is their focus upon the liturgical action as co-curators of the Eucharist. As co-curators they were central to the liturgical action. They spoke of the real work they were doing for others and for God.

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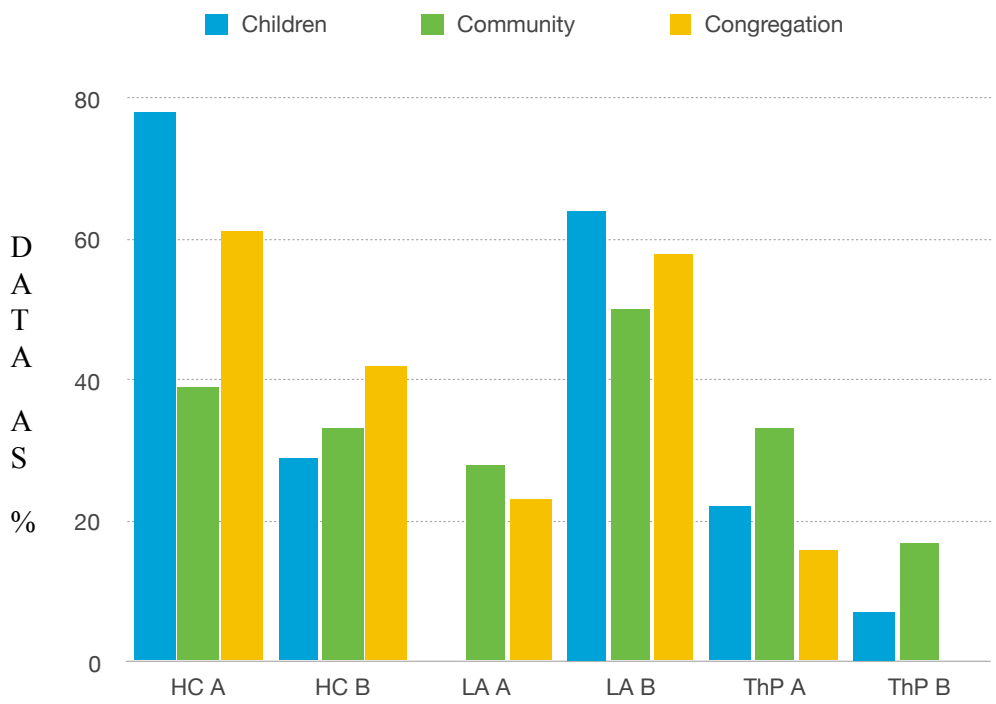
[7] In his Address to the Nobility of the German Nation (1520), Luther criticized the traditional distinction between the "temporal" and "spiritual" orders—the laity and the clergy—arguing that all who belong to Christ through faith, baptism, and the Gospel shared in the priesthood of Jesus Christ (George, 2016)

Table 11.4 Comparison of all the eucharist data gathered in phase A and phase B



The table shows that the children did not have experiences in phase A that could be coded at Liturgical Action. However, in phase B there were many experiences. This might be expected given that the children were co-curating in this phase. In the first phase the children made no comments at all about liturgical action. There could be several reasons why liturgical actions were not discussed in phase A. One practical reason could be visibility. The children simply couldn't easily see what was happening from their perspective in the congregation when they were sitting or standing behind and beside people taller than them. Even when the liturgical action comes closer, in processions for example, it is still difficult for children to see with adults around them.

My experiences of attending church with my Mother were just like this. We sat nearer the back and furthest from the aisle in case I drew attention from critical adults. I can recall whole services when I could only hear but not see. This finding is also supported by the evidence that in both phases the children enjoyed the Peace because at this time in the service they were able to move about and meet other people. This was particularly commented upon in the first phase.

Another outcome from the children's focus on Liturgical Action was their increasing sense of ownership of the curating role. They were keen to discuss how this work could be developed. In phase B their focus is almost entirely upon 'their

work' as the children described it. My journal expresses my feelings at hearing the experiences of the children: "They sounded so animated, so joyful. They had enjoyed co-curating. It had given them joy" (Journal 2, p.38).

My journal writing went on to reflect upon beauty in relation to the joy I felt in hearing the experiences of the children. Their joy made my joy complete like the joining of a circle. I used the word 'coherence' and the exclamation: 'it works!' (p.38) to describe the completeness I felt. The children, in their joy of co-curating led me to feelings of being at one with the children in their experiences because these were mine too. The children were agents for deepening my experience of the Eucharist and of God.

A second finding from this phase is that the other groups' references to Liturgical Action were also significantly increased in phase B. This finding provides evidence, not only that in co-curating the Eucharist the children discovered the Eucharist was for them too and they felt a big part of it, but also the children were agents not only for my experience but the other adult participants' experiences of the curatorial of worship. However, unlike me, the community group researchers were interested in what the children were doing when co-curating, but it did not deepen their experience of worship and they were disappointed by this outcome. Similarly, the finding from the congregation researchers was that their experience of the Eucharist was largely unaffected by the co-curation of children.

The participants expressed their love of the Eucharist and did this directly by describing what was most important to them in the worship, where their strongest emotions were felt, where they were most involved and where they came felt closest to God. But they also expressed their deep feelings about holy communion indirectly through all aspects of the worship, for example, in the singing of hymns and the prayers. They felt that all that came before led to what they saw as the deep, mysterious and climactic part of the service.

11.4 An evaluation of the experiences of co-curation

In this final section I draw together the key findings from these analysis chapters relating to discipleship, power and eucharist. The most significant finding has been the experiences of the children when co-curating the Eucharist. In phase B when the children were part of the curatorial helping to make worship happen their experience

of belonging and becoming as characteristics of discipleship was significantly increased. The key finding from an analysis of power is that the children's experiences of feeling empowered greatly increased. In this chapter the key finding from an analysis of eucharist is the children's enjoyment of liturgical action. They loved making the Eucharist happen through co-curation.

Curation of the Eucharist involves carrying out liturgical actions. The enacting or animating of the liturgy through the carrying of objects of symbolic significance such as cross, incense, candles and book of the gospels, and through the giving of bread and wine in communion, provides an attentive focus. The findings show that the children's experience of worship was deepened by being co-curators. The children's sense of belonging/becoming and empowerment grew through the experience of being co-curators of these liturgical actions.

The findings also show that the adults were more empowered and more involved when seeing the children co-curate. For some of the adults co-curation did deepen their spiritual experience. Some described feelings of being drawn in or wanting to be co-curators too. For others it was just more important to see that children were at the centre of worship. For the congregation participants who were also part of the serving teams, having a child alongside as they curated the worship, was a profound spiritual experience.

Taken together the evidence shows that in this research when children were given opportunities to co-curate the Eucharist they were agents for deepening the experience of worship for others. For some adults this was a spiritual experience. The next and final chapter in this section examines a unifying concept for the thesis drawn from these findings to explain the phenomenon of the agency of children in co-curation.

Chapter 12 Attentive Presence - a unifying concept

‘Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak’

(Berger, 1972, p.7).

Figure 12.1 A child’s attentive presence

How then, does this research contribute to an understanding of the impact of co-curating the Eucharist with children on the spiritual flourishing of the church? In this chapter I return to the conceptual framework, and drawing upon the discussion of the empirical research presented in Chapters 9-11, propose attentive presence as a unifying concept which will contribute to knowledge, practice and future research.

12.1 An illustration of attentive presence

The picture (fig.12.1) illustrates an example of attentive presence and my working definition of co-curation described in Chapter 4: ‘co-curation is the participation of

the whole worshipping community in the practical process of making manifest the presence of God.' The child at the centre is my granddaughter. The photo was taken in Taizé during the Saturday evening prayer. This service each week recalls the resurrection of Christ. Children begin a liturgical action by lighting their candles from the Paschal (Easter) candle. The children pass on the light until everyone's candles are lit. In the picture the two-year-old, once her candle is lit, turns straightaway to pass the light on to those behind her. Though taking photos is discouraged my friend could not help but capture the moment of the child passing the light. When I asked later what prompted him, he described a great feeling of joy as his attention was drawn to the wonder in the child's face. These feelings echoed those of an orthodox theologian.

> The deep sense of mystery is rediscovered as a kind of 'inner light,' and the young people feel it. It radiates from a face, a face that allows us to interpret all the other faces in this light….For nothing is more beautiful than a face illuminated by an expression of trust and gentleness and in beauty there is a mystery which is ultimately the mystery of God.
> Clement 1997, pp.21-22

The photo illustrates both the curation of worship in liturgical action: producing 'a moment of promise, of redemption to come' and the curatorial: 'a disturbance, an utterance, a narrative' (Martinon and Rogoff, 2013, p.ix) that led my companions and me to reflect upon the experience. Promise, redemption, disturbance, utterance and narrative are descriptions of a process of transformation, which, in the experience of worship contributes to spiritual flourishing. The process may be described as one of being attentively present to that which is being curated and becoming part of the unfolding story.

This anecdote provides an illustration of attentive presence in the relationships formed between liturgical action, child and adult that led to spiritual flourishing. Clement states: 'it is no use talking to them [young people] about communion if we cannot show them a place where communion is being worked out' (1997, p.12). The children's experiences of co-curating worship at St O and St E have shown that they felt part of those communities. It was also a time of 'working out' community for all the researchers, the worshipping communities and for me. Clement also describes being part of the worship of Taizé as 'a sort of learning by

practice' (1997, p.20). This comment on the experience of doing and being in the Taizé community worship is supported by my findings.

12.2 Attentive presence in the data

Identifying attentive presence as a unifying concept in the data is a means to answer the question for this research: is co-curating the Eucharist with children important to the spiritual flourishing of the church? I have found from the coded data and emerging from the thematic analysis presented in Chapters 9-11, this particular form of presence, rooted in attention, running like a thread through the responses of the co-researchers.

12.2.1 The attentive presence of adults

I returned to the raw data using attentive presence as a primary node at which to code references that could be described as attentive presence in the data sets of the adult congregation and community participants. In all I found 32 references in the raw data from community and congregation data sets when children co-curated. I coded these at the new primary node of attentive presence until saturation point was reached at 11 categories. I identified attentive presence in two ways: first through what the adults saw and second, through what the adults felt from what they saw.

Table 12.1 Categories of attentive presence in the adult data sets

The seeing of adults	The feeling of adults
What the adults saw: Happiness Reverence Wonder Expectancy Focus Giving	**What the adults experienced:** Being drawn to/in Feeling close to Greater focus/more involved Their worship enhanced An added dimension

From the identification of these categories we can come to a fuller understanding of the unifying concept of attentive presence. It is seen in being drawn to the presence of another or by attending to something or someone else, or something other than oneself. It is seen in being drawn to the action or actions of another, so entering into the action.

It is also seen in being present to the other. The child researchers, in being an attentive presence to the adults in worship, changed, transformed and deepened those people's spiritual experiences. The co-researchers for example, experienced feelings of warmth, joy and wonder when the Eucharist was co-curated with children: 'when you watch children like that, because it's quite a religious setting, but they're seeing it in a different way to us, you get a sense of wonder' (18). An added dimension to their worship was also felt: '…receiving the eucharist itself is even more powerful' (1).

This is not to say that attentive presence is something that can only be experienced when children are co-curating the Eucharist. In adult only worship, where the curation of the liturgy and the conditions of worship are such, then the categories of attentive presence that I found in the data, such as witnessing the focus of others or feeling more involved because of seeing adults carrying out liturgical actions, still apply.

12.2.2 The attentive presence of children

Next, I coded references that could be described as attentive presence in the data sets of the child participants. I found 27 units of data from the two child group data sets gathered in phase B when they co-curated the Eucharist. From these I found 10 categories. All of these related to feelings that showed the children's attentiveness to the curatorial and their attentiveness to God.

Table 12.2 Categories of attentive presence in the child data sets

Attentiveness to the curatorial	Attentiveness to God
Happiness Partnering someone Part of something important More understanding Giving/helping Receiving	Close to God/Jesus Partnering God/Jesus Feeling blessed by God/Jesus Giving to God/Jesus

The children described their feelings of happiness about their work and working with others to help make the worship happen. They also wanted to learn more and give to and receive from others. What is distinctive about the children's comments is their attentiveness to God. They openly spoke about feeling close to

God, feeling God with them and being blessed by God. They also related their co-curating work to giving something to God.

Happiness is a strong category that I found in both the adult and child data sets. The participants said that seeing the happy faces of the children co-curating drew them closer and made them more attentive. I also found giving as a category in both sets as an indicator of attentive presence. Giving is a selfless characteristic. In giving you are focussed on or more attentive to the other: 'I was doing more stuff and I was helping more people' (10). The children also spoke explicitly about what they received, which is another dimension of giving: 'it feels like you are giving a gift to him. Sometimes you received a gift from god.'

I have found in the data that attention was paid to or through the presence of another and their liturgical actions. I have also found that being involved in the curation of worship attention can result in more awareness of God. The children were very aware or attentive to the presence of God as they did their work. From these two perspectives I have found attentive presence to be a unifying concept. The next section draws upon these findings to explore the concept of attentive presence by revisiting the integrated conceptual framework for this enquiry.

12.3 The conceptual framework and attentive presence

This research is rooted in the question: is co-curating the Eucharist with children important to the spiritual flourishing of the church? I created an integrated conceptual framework drawn from literature (fig.2). The question feeds the trunk of conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist drawn from the literature and were used as the basis for the analysis of the data.

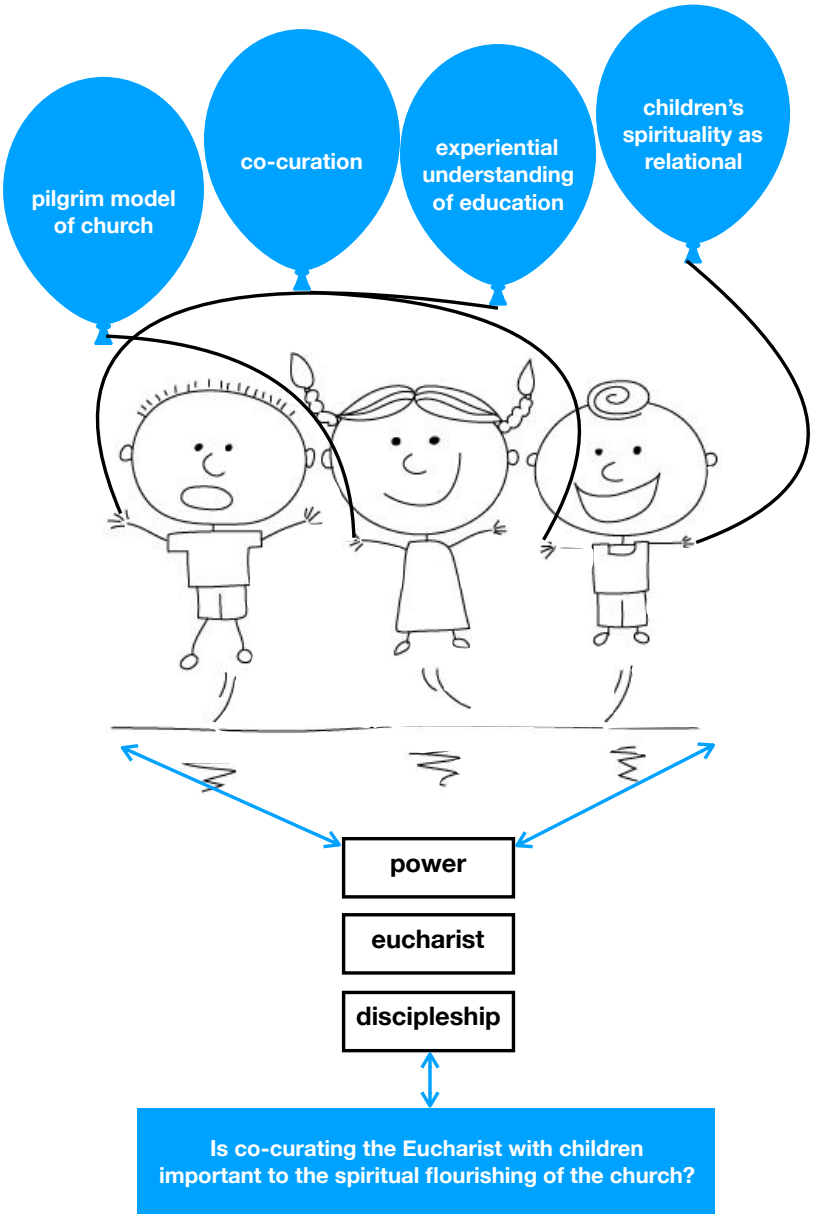


Figure 12.2 The conceptual framework

As we looked at in Chapter 9, a thematic analysis of the data through the concept of discipleship found that when children co-curated the Eucharist their experience of belonging, becoming and believing as characteristics of discipleship was significantly increased.

> 'It's when we go to God, well not go to God, when we go to the bread and the wine and when we give peace cause when we give peace its like shaking hands with God almost if you do it with your eyes closed, if you close your hands and do that its kinda nice. And when you go and have the wine and the bread its like, its like eating Jesus' (7).

This comment could have been made in phase A of the field work when the child was in the congregation, but it wasn't. The child is sharing this experience in

the context of the curatorial. He talks naturally, using the second person. He expresses inclusion and communion in talking about his involvement in the sharing of the Peace and communion and makes a direct link between these liturgical actions and the presence of God. He felt close to God. The child was more aware, more attentive to the presence of God.

In Chapter 10 the key finding from a thematic analysis of power was that the children's experiences of feeling empowered greatly increased.

> 'When I was someone at the front when I was like getting stuff and putting it on the table I was near Jesus and it felt as if I was like erm like touching Jesus' (8).

The child uses the first person to describe his role and active verbs 'getting' and 'putting' which indicate he feels important in doing the work of curation. Like child (7) he makes a direct link between what he is doing and being close to or attentive to God. The child is empowered not only to carry out important functions in the curatorial but to relate these to the presence of God.

The presence of the children at the centre of worship engaged, involved and made some of the adults more attentive to the worship so that they in turn felt more empowered. One participant described the feelings he had been struggling with about receiving communion at the altar rail because of his difficulties in walking. He could have opted like others to receive in his seat but wanted to continue to go to the rail. Seeing children the other side of the rail, co-curating, gave him renewed confidence to keep going: 'the children were there so I knew it was ok for me to be there too' (4).

The key finding from an analysis of eucharist (Chapter 11) is the children's enjoyment of liturgical action. They loved making the Eucharist happen through co-curation.

> 'I felt really involved, yes, definitely because I wasn't just sitting there normally and watching the worship happen I actually took part and it felt like you were part of a puzzle almost of a church. So that's like really important' (12).

The worship experience of the children was significantly deepened by their happiness at being present at the centre of the Eucharist helping to make it happen. The concept of presence is fundamental to the Eucharist as the worshippers are invited to be present to each other in sharing communion and in being present to God in giving

thanks. The children saw their liturgical actions as real work for others and for God. The attention of the adults was drawn to the children carrying out these actions, which in turn deepened their experience of worship.

The happy children in the conceptual framework tree are flourishing balloons drawing attention to the four theoretical perspectives that have informed this enquiry. The next section returns to those perspectives to discover their relationship with the unifying concept of attentive presence found through empirical research.

12.4 The literature and attentive presence

I introduced the presentation of literature (Chapter 3) by stating that this research was a means by which to understand church as a 'paradigm of inclusion in the Eucharist regardless of age' (p.30). Paradigm of inclusion is an indicator of attentive presence. The children were attentively present to their co-curating and their experience of God through that work. The adults were attentively present to the children at the centre of the Eucharist. For some adults this deepened their experience of worship. In looking at inclusion in this way we can see that attentive presence is an important means of building relationships of equal and mutual value between adults and children.

Having found attentive presence as a unifying concept it now becomes possible to trace indications of this theme in the four theoretical perspectives: a pilgrim model of church; co-curation; an experiential understanding of education; and children's spirituality as relational. With hindsight, it becomes apparent that features of attentive presence were proposed by some scholars.

12.4.1 Pilgrim Model of Church

From the examination of church reports (3.1.1 pp.29-33) I concluded that to fully realise a pilgrim model of church of inclusion and communion the recommended church as child expression of a pilgrim model should be reversed. I argued that child as church was a better expression. By being child-like adults and children together can grow in relation to each other and with God. Therefore, I expressed this as child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way and have returned to this theme throughout this thesis. Attentive presence is characterised by seeing and feeling the happiness of others. Child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way is directly linked to the category of happiness as a feature of attentive presence. Happiness is a child-like quality. Adults may feel happy but children

spontaneously express their feelings. The research found that children expressed their happiness in their faces and actions and the adults' attention was drawn to them. I have found that for some adults this deepened their own experience of worship.

Also in the literature I cited Tiller (1987) who wrote of the importance of a move away from a cultic ecclesiology with leadership in worship held by the priest alone to one of shared leadership which Tiller describes as wholeness. Wholeness is inherently relational, it is shared. Attentive presence is an expression of wholeness. My research shows that it is experienced in relationship with others and with God. I found that attentive presence to be an excellent summary of Weil's view (2002) of children as contributors through the involvement of the whole of themselves.

I discussed Wells' use of the term: overaccept as a means to full inclusion and communion. To overaccept is to be with others in worship as a generous and selfless act (2004, p.39). If adults overaccept by letting go of their hold on worship by making space for children to be at the centre of worship, helping to make it happen then they are also released to be more attentively present. As my research shows, selflessly giving and receiving are categories of attentive presence.

I have found further literature to draw upon in relation to the first theoretical perspective: a pilgrim model of church and attentive presence. In the twin virtues of patience and presence described by Stassen and Gushee (2003) a particular moral mode of being needs to be present. Patience, in the forms of stillness or waiting or attentiveness leads to presence or holiness. The connections and bonds between patience and presence take us to an understanding of wholeness as relational, described by Poling (1991) as a web of relations. Again, essential to this web of wholeness is equality in being present together or 'being as communion' (Zizioulas, 1985, p.31). Patience and waiting are other ways of describing attentiveness to the other. Being attentively present together in giving and receiving is a means to be in communion which can lead to spiritual flourishing.

12.4.2 Co-curation

Features of attentive presence can also be found in the literature relating to the discussion of co-curation. I have made reference to the work of Martinon and Rogoff earlier in this chapter. I cited the work of these art curators who are concerned with the experience of engaging with curation where the curation initiates reflection and

encourages the participants to new ways of 'thinking or sensing the world' (2013, p.ix). They describe this experience as the curatorial. The curatorial necessarily involves becoming more attentive to the process of curation. I drew on the work of Gadamer to develop this idea of the relationship between curator, object and viewer being transformational.

I also examined the work of Billings (2004, p.174) who stated that if we believe God to be beautiful then worship should express that beauty by giving opportunities for all our senses, our imagination and our affections. The data found, and summarised as categories of attentive presence, that adults witnessed beauty in the happiness and wonder of the children. They were also drawn in and felt closer to the curatorial of worship.

12.4.3 Experiential understanding of education

I have found categories of happiness, giving and receiving in the children's presence and actions. In the literature relating to an experiential understanding of education I cited Dewey as the inspiration for an understanding of the child as agent in their own learning born out of making connections with prior experience. Vygotsky saw the investigative nature of experiential learning as important to a child's sense of their own identity. The child co-researchers found that partnering someone was important to their experience of co-curation. It helped them feel part of something important and helped them understand more about the work of co-curation but also their experience of God in the curatorial of worship. I found these to be categories of attentive presence.

Attentive presence can be seen therefore to be a characteristic of experiential learning. I recall from my time as a teacher that when children became involved in something so interesting that was happening in the classroom, so attentively present to it, they didn't hear the bell or ignored it so they could continue their work! When I put a supplementary question to the child participants: 'I wonder what you thought about the length of the service' they were non-plussed. I added: 'did you think it was long?' I had added this question because adults often think children need short services.What became clear was that the children thought it a daft question. Their involvement in co-curating the worship was important, not how long it took. The children were so attentively present to their work that time became immaterial.

From the work of Corsaro (2011, pp.20-21) I drew the idea that children's power and agency are not just important ideas in education but are active contributors to the development of society. My thesis rests on a premise that children have not been regarded as active contributors to the development of church, particularly its worship. When children co-curated the Eucharist at St O and St E they began to shape its worship. By their attentive presence to the curatorial they transformed the worship. Some adults found that their worship was enhanced and that it was more dimensional.

I also drew on the work of Crossan's exegesis of the Gospel of Mark (2012, p. 175) and the parabolic nature the Kingdom of God to develop a thesis of a pilgrim model of church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. Jesus teaches his disciples that they must become like children if they are going to learn about the Kingdom of God. This is an experiential model of learning where the adult has to experience the powerlessness of becoming like a child to discover a new kind of power.

I found attentive presence related to the work of Vilhaeur (2010, p.94) who has examined Gadamer's 'ontological thread', describing it as a relationship of equality formed with another person or with God that can lead to 'new understandings.' This type of knowledge or understanding is seen as a kind of play which leads to truth. There is a playfulness in attentive presence in being drawn to the other's attentiveness, like a ball bounced back and forth between players in a game, each time developing the play of the other. We can take this further by seeing attentive presence as part of the whole play of worship or playing church as I found in the paper by Ziegenhals (2014).

12.4.4 Children's spirituality as relational

In returning to the literature relating to children's spirituality as relational, attentive presence can be discerned in the Godly Play storytelling experience where focussing upon the objects in the story brings such an attentiveness that the participants 'disappear' into the story (Berryman, 2002, p.91). Berryman describes a centre point or middle realm that is arrived at that may also be discerned in the concept of attentive presence (2013). The relational element of storyteller and participant engaged together in the unfolding story through the use of objects may also be seen

as being in relationship with others and with God and in being part of the language of the ritual (Nye, 2006). The S.P.I.R.I.T acronym of Space; Process; Imagination; Relationship; Intimacy; Trust (2009, p.41) relate to some of the categories of attentive presence I have found in the child data, such as wonder, partnering, giving and closeness to God.

Attentive presence is also an example of the self-authenticity of the religious experience (Hay, 1999). The experiences of children feeling the presence of God and dead relatives in what Adams (2017, p.5) describes as potentially 'thin spaces' may also be seen to be an example of attentive presence. The surroundings themselves, stillness and candles contribute to being attentive to or drawn to the other in relationship.

I also found in the work of Vanier (1979, p.51) that being child-like eases the way to forming bonds and connections with each other and with God. In Christian terms this is described as a covenant or shared agreement. A child-like mode of being enables a flow between those in a covenantal relationship. Through worship and ritual acts mystery is encountered. We can see the covenantal relationships involved, where God is found to be present and at work and mystery encountered, in enabling attentive presence. Vanier puts it as standing outside of ourselves to better see ourselves (1979, p53).

Together, the features of attentive presence identified in the literature, inform an understanding of the child as church in receiving grace and blessings as a gift and in living in trust (CGMC, 1991, p.42). In particular, for the Church of England this is an important finding that it is hoped will lead to a more informed understanding about how to be child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way.

12.5 Perspectives of attentive presence

This section presents five perspectives of attentive presence: spiritual, political, cultural, ethical and historical drawn from literature.

12.5.1 Spiritual

Attentive presence has at its centre a transcendent quality difficult to define and ultimately a mystery. This is suggested in categories I found such as happiness and wonder. These point to a secondary and deeper experience to that of being drawn to.

It is as though the witnessing of another's attentive presence forms a relational connection with one's own attending resulting in a shared narrative. These experiences transcend the norm and can be described as spiritual. Martinon and Rogoff found similarly mysterious qualities to describe the curatorial: promise, redemption, disturbance, utterance and narrative (2013, p.ix).

Characteristics of attentive presence then, found in the curatorial of worship are linked to spiritual experience. Within the context of Christian spirituality this may be discerned as the presence or workings of the Holy Spirit. When this is within the context of worship where the curation of liturgy, setting and sound combine then there are the possibilities of connections forming that transcend everyday experience. These connections create a bond or relationship, with God and with others, in the shared worship experience.

12.5.2 Political

My research journey began with two biblical verses: 'Jesus takes a child…' to illustrate the Kingdom of God. The corporate worship of early Christians was a political act, not based upon rights for individuals by broadening access to worship but rather, that by being present each person was contributing to a piece of political action. Their presence meant they were participating in a way not conceived of in secular society.

> As a corporate action, worship includes in full participation all the representatives of the debased household: women, slaves, children, artisans, and so on – a reconciliation of hitherto unreconciled groups and realms of social life.
> Wannenwetsch, 2004, p.78

Worship in the very early church can be seen to be revolutionary in presenting a new form of society otherwise unheard of in the very rigid social codes of first-century Jewish and Roman societies. Intergenerational eucharistic worship today may be difficult to achieve as it requires the changing of hearts and minds about what worship is for. Not something divorced or detached from the social construction of the worshipping community but representing an alternative society based upon Christian ethical principles. Jesus, in taking a child and placing it in the centre of the gathered adults demonstrated a new political reality, a new society based upon a

'eucharistic communion' that is at one and the same time completely ours but never owned by us (Yoder, 1997, pp.86-88).

In Part 2 (2.5 p.23) I discussed the political view of Boff that the church needs to move from a position of liberation for the poor to liberation of the poor. The church is the people together, often described as the body of Christ. Children are full members of that body. The agency of children in co-curating the Eucharist can be summarised as their attentive presence.

12.5.3 Cultural

By learning to understand and recognise attentive presence the church can address the importance of children at the centre of eucharistic worship as examples of those proposed by the *Unfinished Business* report of the British Council of Churches (BCCCGMC, 1991) and discussed in Chapter 3. Children are naturally attentive. Berryman suggests.

> It may be that children are as naturally mystical as fish naturally know how to swim. Adults, having lost that ability by disuse and cultural emphasis on analytical, left-brain, verbal skills, merely do not realise it.
> 1979, p.272

It is significant in these research findings that the children took to the mystery of co-curating the Eucharist as naturally as Berryman's fish analogy. The quotation at the beginning of this chapter is taken from *Ways of Seeing* by John Berger: 'Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognises before it can speak.' Berger goes on to say that seeing before words is a way of seeing 'which establishes our place in the surrounding world' (1972, p.7). The world in this case is the world of liturgical worship with holy communion as its focus. Attentive presence has at its heart an idea that we are somehow seeing this world in a new way. The adult co-researchers saw the world of worship differently through the naturally liturgical presence of the children. The children enabled this to happen by their attentive presence.

12.5.4 Ethical

Another view of attentive presence is to return to the theme of reuniting morality and holiness as a means of liberation (Yoder, 1997, p.213). Soskice states that: 'we must ask *what* we love, *what* we attend to, in order to know *who we are and should be'* (2007, p.8). The argument made is that love is a key moral concept and the place

where love and attention meet 'both draws us out of ourselves and constitutes us fully as selves' (p.8). The paying attention to the beautiful in Simone Weil's description of liturgical practice (1952, p.120) is rooted in holiness. Paying attention to children paying attention is an example of where morality and holiness are reunited. It is a loving, freeing moment that breathes transcendence but doesn't necessarily come easily. It takes time (Brown Taylor, 2009, p.24). Worship, particularly the ordered liturgy of the Eucharist, gives time to the participants to pay attention, in order to enter into a reverent or spiritual mode of being that may lead us to moments of transcendence. Where love and attention meet is perhaps a defining definition of attentive presence.

12.5.5 Historical

The unifying concept of attentive presence is important to the historical perspective of children and the Eucharist presented in the literature. In Chapter 3 I charted developments in thinking, from the Second Vatican Council and its report: *Lumen Gentium* (1964) to the successive reports from the British Council of Churches. The journey led to the BCCCGMC recommendation that churches should move from a position of 'attracting children to worship' and child-focussed clubs and activities, to be risk-takers in welcoming children as full members of the church and central to its worship (*Unfinished Business,*1991, p.69). The council concluded that liturgy is not about individual but corporate worship, where the whole body comes together, where 'even watching must become seeing, looking with attention, because all the people are involved' (p.21). This aptly describes the concept of attentive presence. The call was to the adoption of a pilgrim model of church where children as well as adults are 'involved in liturgical practice' and where congregations 'take seriously children's developing appreciation of symbol and ritual which are so central to their experience of play and fantasy' (p.21).

Summary

In Part 4 I have presented the findings from empirical research to answer the question: Is co-curating the Eucharist important to the spiritual flourishing of the church? A narrative analysis of the co-researcher summaries found that co-curating the Eucharist with children was thought to be a good thing and should be continued.

The participants said services that included the receiving of holy communion were welcomed. Their responses made many references to liturgical action. The theme of community and the church family featured prominently. A thematic analysis of the conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist drawn from the literature found significant increases in the children's experiences of the Eucharist between phase A without co-curation and phase B with co-curation. The findings show marked increases in characteristics of discipleship, feelings of empowerment and enjoyment of the Eucharist by carrying out liturgical actions. The research has also found that adults felt more empowered and more involved when children co-curated.

Taken together, the thematic analysis of data provided by the child, community and adult group session from phase B of the fieldwork led me to identify attentive presence as an emergent unifying concept. A further analysis of the data coding at attentive presence as the primary node found categories of attentive presence that confirmed it to be a unifying concept. I returned to the integrated conceptual framework for this research and applied attentive presence to the conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist drawn from literature. I summarised the relationship between the question for research, themes from literature to address the question, and children at the centre of the enquiry. I next returned to the literature that has informed this work to identify where relationships between the newly identified concept of attentive presence and the literature were evident. I found examples in all four theoretical perspectives that I could relate to attentive presence.

The final task in this analysis of data was to summarise what I have learnt by presenting spiritual, political, cultural, ethical and historical perspectives informing the enquiry.

Part 5 Conclusions

Introduction

I have undertaken a small-scale theological enquiry into my practice of co-curating the Eucharist with children that had the capacity to develop theory. I set out to discover if this was important to the spiritual flourishing of the two parishes where I work. My methodology was inductive. The notion of attentive presence has made a difference to my practice thus underpinning my claim to have made an original contribution to professional practice and theoretical knowledge. The conclusions to this research into the spiritual impact of children co-curating the Eucharist are presented as a set of propositions that others can adopt and test in their respective contexts.

Chapter 13 focusses upon the distinctive methodological contribution proposing:

1. That this research has the potential for a paradigm shift in understanding about children and the Eucharist by extending the historical view of this relationship onto what I have discovered.
2. That a Participatory Action Research living theory methodology can make a significant contribution to the field of Practical Theology.
3. That the voices of children can and should be included in research about them.
4. That the work of this insider priest researcher adds weight to the argument for a developmental role for the priest researcher in the Church of England.

Chapter 14 is concerned with the original contribution this research makes to knowledge and practice, further proposing:

5. That co-curating the Eucharist with children is one means of achieving a pilgrim model of child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way.
6. That the concept of attentive presence discovered through a thematic analysis of discipleship, power and eucharist is an indicator of children as agents for God's participation in the world.

Chapter 13 A distinctive methodological contribution

I have employed Participatory Action Research and living theory in a new field of investigation and identified the issue of children at the centre of eucharistic worship as worthy of investigation and explanation. There is much that can be learnt and taken from this enquiry. Through research of literature and an inductive methodological approach I have extended knowledge about the spiritual impact of co-curating the Eucharist with children. This practical research subject has been validated through qualitative research. From a distinctive methodology in Participatory Action Research I present four propositions that lend themselves to further research. The chapter concludes with a critique of the methodology.

13.1 Proposing a paradigm shift in understanding

Successive reports discussed in Chapter 3 led to the conclusion that the 'business' of children at the centre of worship is still 'unfinished'. The church still struggles with how to affirm and resource children and see them as central to its Sunday morning worship (2006, p.64). That struggle is confirmed by the C of E's most recent report whose conclusion states:

> …evidence alone is not enough to bring about change. It's action by the church that turns useful and interesting reports into genuine change, that deepens the faith and commitment of young people and enables the whole church to grow. And that happens at grass-roots level, in the parish.
> 2016, p. 34

Furthermore then, this research has the potential for a paradigm shift in beginning to fill the gap by taking the 'grass-roots' action the 2016 report calls for. Not just by doing something different but through practical theological research involving those the church is most concerned about. The distinctive methods of focus groups of co-researchers responding to the phenomenon of co-curating the Eucharist with children and feeding back their findings to the adults at the centre of church was empowering. It is a means by which other churches can try out something new and learn from the practice.

13.2 Proposing PAR living theory for practical theology

The distinctiveness of the methods used were derived from a PAR living theory methodology that can make a significant contribution to the field of Practical Theology. The contribution to that field is doing practical theology differently by a changed approach. This research is doing something for theology that is fairly standard in educational research. Increasingly, living theory as an off shoot of PAR, is employed in education research. Like research in the field of education, my methodology reveals the process of learning and teaching. In adopting PAR living theory to research a particular approach to worship at St O and St E the research revealed what happened when children co-curated the Eucharist.

At its heart a living theory approach to research generates several outcomes, not least how the researcher's learning and the learning of others has been influenced by the research process, and that may give confidence to others 'to exercise their capacity for freedom and creativity' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.58). This approach to research has informed my practice and enabled others to participate and learn from their experiences of talking about children co-curating the Eucharist. In this way a living theory approach is rooted in transformation.

The Professional Doctorate is also connected to living theory. O'Connor states that: "action research, in the form of living theory, and practical theology are inextricably linked in this exploration of the influence of values" (2015, p.58). Such an inductive methodology acknowledges that as the parish priest I am an insider researcher, exploring my practice in relation to the practice found in my two worshipping communities and in the Church of England of which we are a part. Adopting a living theory approach to this research has proven to be appropriate, in embarking upon a journey of discovery about my practice, and validated through qualitative research.

13.3 Proposing research <u>with</u> children and the Eucharist

A third proposition is that in the Church of England the voices of children can and should be included in research about them. A child researcher's response to the question: 'I wonder what your thoughts and feelings were as you helped to make the worship happen?' felt prophetic when I heard them:

‘it felt like you were part of a puzzle almost of a church,
you know like a puzzle of a thing that’s going to happen’

These feelings echoed my own as I set out to unpack the puzzle of why the Church of England has struggled with children and the Eucharist. The theological imperative for this enquiry has been ultimately a focus upon an ideal of a worshipping community as a sign of the kingdom. This thesis has presented the argument that if children are purposefully excluded then there is no sign, whereas Jesus’s sign is to deliberately select a small child to illustrate the reality of God’s kingdom (The Bible, Mark. 10:14).

The research method involved child focus groups who shared their experiences of co-curating the Eucharist and talked theologically about meeting Jesus in the worship. Furthermore, the children fed back their findings to adults and the adults listened and learnt from the children. It is accepted practice in the fields of education and psychology that the voices of children are heard in academic research. A recently published C of E report of a wide-ranging survey, concerned with discovering answers to a fundamental question, directly relates to this research.

> What helps root young people in the worshipping life of the Church of England so that they continue to engage with the Church as a place of spiritual nurture and growth into their adult years.
> Church of England Education Office, 2018, foreword

The research sought responses from young adults, teenagers, parents but not children under the age of 16. The research was about how to nurture the discipleship of children but the voices of children were not heard.

In contrast, my research has not only included children as co-researchers but found they made a valuable contribution that has not only led to the finding of the unifying concept of attentive presence, but also to the knowledge that without their actions and voices real change would not have happened at St O and St E.

13.4 Proposing support for parish researchers

The work of this insider priest researcher, I propose, will add weight to the argument for a developmental role for the parish/priest researcher in the Church of England in relation to co-curation. The C of E has not got a good track record in actively promoting, enacting, disseminating and evaluating the results of its reports or

providing opportunities for parish level empirical research to substantiate them. For example, the groundbreaking Tiller Report (1987) recommended a corporate approach to leadership from within the local worshipping community. As a result some dioceses introduced training schemes for Ordained Local Ministers. There was no universal approach, some schemes foundered, some thrived and today the opportunity to be called to OLM ministry depends upon which diocese you live in. Empirical research to discover the impact of OLM ministry could have been an important next step to critique the Tiller primary source.

Furthermore, a criticism of the church has been the lack of understanding of qualitative inductive research and the researcher priest.

> Church policy makers questioned the findings and criticised the priest researchers conducting the research for getting too close to the research subjects and, consequently, presenting biased findings…The Church has yet to find appropriate mechanisms that will incorporate parochial clergy in its formation and review of pastoral policies and it is this gap in research experience that this thesis seeks to explore.
> Barley, 2014, pp.20-21

The criticism of that piece of practical theological research is unfounded and based upon a lack of understanding of PAR. The church needs to look at the experience of research in education to discover, not only that the issue of bias is very clearly addressed in the PAR methodology, but the outcomes of the teacher practitioner are of direct benefit to classroom praxis and professional development.

What my research into co-curation with children has shown is that the process and findings have been of direct benefit to my own practice as a parish priest and the congregations of St O and St E. In the practical theological research enquiry cited, the argument was well made for PAR as a methodology that empowers the priest researcher in controlling the research and renewing their practice underpinned by theological frameworks (2014, p.46). It is vital therefore to the further work necessary on co-curation that the church overcomes its resistance to the role of priest researcher and takes seriously research enquiries at parochial level. My research has shown the enormous benefit the C of E could gain by addressing this research methodology and the issue of priest researchers with the seriousness and sophistication they deserve.

However, supporting academic research at parish level is not a straightforward proposition. There are important implications for people who assume the role of researcher such as how might a person with no research experience become a researcher? My chosen route was through a professional doctorate. This safeguarded the authenticity of my research and the well-being of those who took part. For example, under the regulations for the doctorate I could not have begun the field work with children without the successful completion of an enhanced ethics course. Being bounded by university regulations has also provided the necessary legitimacy and validation for my research.

I believe it is possible for these issues to be resolved. Under the umbrella of the C of E's Continuing Ministerial Development programme and appraisal process clergy could be encouraged to read about the research of others in their area/s of interest, participate in the academic research of others and apply formally to undertake their own research.

13.5 A critique

It is important to acknowledge that this was a small-scale study conducted by one priest researcher in the field with voluntary co-researchers. I have defended my ability as a practical theologian and priest researcher to conduct this research and I stand by the validity of its findings. It does however need further work. The co-researchers came together to discuss their experiences after only one or two services. I have justified that aspect of the methodology on the basis that the experience of one service is just as relevant as many and on the practicalities of sustaining co-researcher attendance, particularly the children and community adults, over a longer period of time. However, I accept that a longitudinal study could be attempted.

Another means of critiquing this research is to compare with other methodologies. I made the decision to work with co-researcher groups rather than conducting individual interviews to gather data. There are valid arguments for a one-to-one methodology, particularly when working with children. Lovelock for example, saw the importance of a focus 'on the individual needs of each child and potentially for them to feel safe in discussing personal issues' having tried a group approach in her pilot study. She found an uneasiness amongst the children to talk about their spiritual selves (2017, p.5). Adams states 'All children (and adults) have the right to

privacy, and any undue pressure would not only be unethical but also likely to lead to fabricated responses.' However, Adams presents an alternative point of view that there should be a spirit of mutual respect and openness for children who want to share their experiences in a group environment (2009, p.118). Adams also points out: "Group interviews with children have acknowledged advantages which include feeling comfortable due to being with their friends and hence less intimidating" (2009, p,118). I believe this to be a strength of the methodology.

As a teacher I have been used to generating opportunities for group discussion where children can talk freely. In this research I worked within clear ethical guidelines and the data shows that the children (and adults) felt empowered to talk freely about the spiritual experiences. Important to this methodology however, was that participants were co-researchers not subjects. As co-researchers they took group ownership for their experiences and were willing and happy to present them to the other groups.

The feedback to the PCCs made clear that the research methodology was concerned with the gathering of personal experiences. The congregation groups therefore did not represent either congregation, in the same way as the experiences of the community groups did not in any way represent any others from the local demographic, and the children's groups did not represent all children. However, it is an uncomfortable reality that not everyone will accept even empirical evidence because the data has not provided the results they want. When St E's PCC received the report from their researchers one member questioned the findings. He could not accept that all the participants found that the Eucharist co-curated with children was a positive experience. Even though two members of the congregation group happened to be PCC members, and therefore present when he questioned the findings, this did not dissuade him from refusing to accept their veracity despite the participants' assertions to the contrary. Here is an example of the difficulty of changing hearts and minds in so subjective an area as worship. The PCC member did not want to accept the findings because he did not want children to actively participate in the Eucharist.

Despite the one dissenting voice the research has led to new thinking about St E's hospitality to newcomers. The PCCs of both churches voted to accept the recommendations of the participant researchers that children should be allowed to

continue to co-curate the Eucharist. This has continued whenever children attend who would like to be part of the curatorial of worship.

Chapter 14 An original contribution to knowledge and practice

This final chapter considers the original contribution the research findings can make to the understanding, practice and impact of co-curating the Eucharist with children by presenting two further proposals: a model of child as church and the concept of attentive presence.

14.1 Proposing a child as church model

From the findings from this research I am proposing that co-curating the Eucharist with children is one means of achieving a pilgrim model of child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way. This is the first study into the spiritual impact of the presence of children as co-curators of the Eucharist. Through an inductive, qualitative approach to a constant comparative thematic analysis of the data using the conceptual themes of discipleship, power and eucharist drawn from literature as primary nodes, I found that the discipleship and empowerment of children significantly increased when they co-curated. One important indicator was the number of references to involvement, importance and liturgical action when compared to phase A when the children were in the congregation.

The intent of my research has been to discover firstly whether a curatorial of the Eucharist with children at the centre of the liturgical action was helpful to those present. Participatory Action Research living theory has given me the opportunity to try a new way for those present to experience the Eucharist in a new way and to discover whether it enriches their experience. My hope is that this will reopen a debate kindled by the *Children in the Way report* (1988) where the place of children at the Eucharist was affirmed but as my literature research and examples of current practice has shown, is not yet fully realised. In 2.3 I cited a Church of England report that stated children learn the language of worship more easily than adults; that children in worship enrich 'the experience of the whole congregation' (Liturgical Commission, 2007 6.9.2). These statements are now supported by empirical evidence. The child co-researchers, though unused to a full Eucharist, easily adopted the liturgical language and, from the evidence of the adult co-researchers, clearly enriched their experience of worship.

This research has shown that by adopting an inclusive approach to eucharistic worship curated in imaginative ways, children and those new to church or liturgical

worship can feel welcomed. The welcome can be felt as a sense of belonging that is a helpful step on the journey of discipleship. The practice at St O and St E is informed by a new inclusive culture discovered through the experience of co-curating the Eucharist with children. If children wish to help make the worship happen they can.

My review of the theoretical perspective of a pilgrim model of church led me to an informed recommendation by the British Council of Churches that a pilgrim model of church as child was best suited to the nurturing of new disciples (Chapter 3 p33). I proposed however, that the model was seeing the issue from the wrong way round. I contended that a pilgrim model of child as church in being-with-each-other-in-a-child-like-way was the aspiration for an inclusive church.

It is important to state that co-curating the Eucharist is not a panacea for filling our churches with children and families. My work and practice has been much misunderstood. The person responsible for curate training in Derby diocese cited this research to a curate as a means of promoting the importance of creating liturgies for children. He used the Nursery Rhyme Mass (Rundell, 2011) as an example, making an assumption that this is what my practice of co-curation is about, given my research field is children and worship. This is a complete misunderstanding of co-curating the Eucharist with children in intergenerational worship. A google reference to the Nursery Rhyme Mass describes it as "promoting a childish approach to worship" (www.nurseryrhymemass.org.uk/). This is completely different from the church as child model I am proposing - conceptually and practically.

14.2 Proposing attentive presence as a sign of children's agency

The last proposal is that the concept of attentive presence, discovered through a thematic analysis of discipleship, power and eucharist, is an indicator of children as agents for God's participation in the world. The agency of children co-curating the Eucharist with adults, evidenced in the experiences gathered from child and adult co-researchers, has been found to contribute to attentive presence. I have also found evidence that characteristics of attentive presence contribute to spiritual flourishing.

This thesis has addressed the points raised by the Church of England report, which states 'the language of worship is more easily learnt as a child. That the worship experiences of all those present is enriched by the presence of children' (2007, 6.9.2). The results of my research provide evidence of this assertion.

What the data shows is that the language of worship is easily learnt by children if they are given opportunities to co-curate. This research has found that seeing children attentively present makes adults more attentively present thereby enriching their experience of worship: 'God is doing something in the life of the body when children are participants in worship' (Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin, 2014, p.4). The findings also show that the agency of children as part of the worshipping community is a mutual blessing. With a child alongside the adult blessing the congregation 'it is no longer one-way communication' (Berryman, 2013, p.183). Kellett states that, though apparently without power in society's terms, children are 'agents of change and knowledge-bearing experts' (Clark et al, eds, 2014, p.28). The theological perspective of an experiential understanding of education when applied to learning in worship suggests a power-shift involving God. By this I mean that worship for the participants was a learning experience that for some related to their feelings about God.

It is clear from these findings that the participants had agency in feeling empowered through the worship they experienced when the children co-curated the Eucharist. For the children, their sense of empowerment in helping to make the worship happen, directly related to discipleship in showing a movement from belonging to becoming and believing.

This research has shown that by overaccepting, that is, making space for others in the curatorial of worship, spiritual flourishing happens. It is only through the experience of the spiritual dimension of worship that the discipleship of individuals becomes formational in belonging, becoming and believing. Attentive presence is both a description of the spiritual dimension and a means to identify spiritual flourishing.

I can state that this kind of data does not exist elsewhere; it begins to fill a gap in knowledge about the importance of co-curating the Eucharist with children and the value of intergenerational worship. It is important therefore, that these conclusions be shared to help other worshipping communities explore the impact of the presence of children at the centre of the worshipping life of their church.

14.3 Agendas for future research

The PAR methodology for this research enquiry is a proven method for practical theological research. It is incumbent upon me therefore to promote and disseminate

this research methodology and its findings. It is hoped that by publishing my research through academic journals such as *Practical Theology:* the journal of the British and Irish Association of Practical Theology (BIAPT) and the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* is the journal of the International Association of Children's Spirituality (IACS) other practical theologians in the field of children's spirituality will want to exploit the potential for further research.

However, a key approach is the development of a network of churches wanting to practice co-curating the Eucharist with children. This in turn may lead to more priest researchers conducting research in their parishes to grow the body of knowledge. It is important to disseminate this research through the current Church of England mechanisms such as the network of diocesan children's advisers and the synodical structures at Deanery, Diocese and General Synod level. There are also opportunities through church conferences and organisations such as PRAXIS, an organisation formed 'to enrich and inform the practice of worship, both traditional and contemporary, in the Church of England' (2017, http://www.praxisworship.org.uk).

Summary

The conclusions form a set of propositions about the original contribution this study has made to knowledge about the spiritual impact of co-curating the Eucharist with children. It is original because it is the first evaluation of this distinctive form of ministry with children. This study fills the gap in understanding the contribution children make to the spiritual flourishing of the church through their presence at the centre of intergenerational liturgical worship.

The abiding sense of working with the data is one of blessing, of being blessed by the data. It is affirming. In the data the action or practice of liturgy is commented on over and over again but not simply as an end in itself. When children and adults and liturgical action are brought together it is as though the circle is joined in attentive presence.

A post-script

Co-curating the Eucharist with children doesn't happen every Sunday at St O and St E. When it happens it is often spontaneous, like a gift:

There had been a succession of Sundays at St O with no children present. That morning as I brought up the rear of the procession during the opening hymn, I spotted a family I had not seen for many months. My heart leapt! As the procession moved up the central aisle I stopped, whispered if anyone would like to join me in helping make the worship happen. Tom, aged 10, got up straight away, and we headed off behind the oblivious procession who had walked on. At the altar rail we lined up together and the adult servers moved aside to make space for Tom. When we all turned and moved down to our seats in front of the congregation, a server quietly placed another chair for Tom by my side and offered him a light to carry. Tom had never co-curated the Eucharist before. He just did what we did. There was no rehearsal or instruction. I sensed the intensity with which he was following. His attentive presence deepened mine. At the Gospel procession I just whispered that he could be with the deacon for this bit and off he went with her, carrying his light. At the Gospel reading in the centre of the church, I noticed Tom standing in front of the book of the Gospels held by a server. Tom's light lit up the page. The service continued in this way. Afterwards, people shook Tom's hand as they left. Two adults had begun coming to St O after the field work was concluded so had not seen co-curation with children at work. They were amazed. They said how attentive they had been to Tom's attentiveness in doing his work. The agency of Tom had deepened their spiritual experience too. When Tom was asked if he would like to help make the worship happen again his response was 'oh yes!'

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Paper 1: 'He called a child, whom he put among them' Inhabiting the sacred space: exploring co-curation with children

'He called a child, whom he put among them'

Inhabiting the sacred space: exploring co-curation with children

Introduction

As a child of nine or ten years old I had a profound religious experience when alone in a church for the first time. I considered the empty space differently. What drew my attention and held it fast was far away in the sanctuary. It shone with blue light. What I felt then and still feel today is very difficult to describe. I was just a child. But I felt I was in a very holy place and that it was good to be there. I knew God was there with me. I did not share that experience with anyone until I was much older. I wouldn't have known what to say. What strikes me now is that so much was given through the simple design of light. I have no idea whether others found this helpful in their spiritual journey but I know that it helped me. Something of what was given was the beginning of my personal relationship with God: my first sense of the numinous and the beginning of discipleship. My childhood vicar was not present but he or someone had turned the light on, had prepared the space.

I cannot say whether the person who curated my childhood church in such a very particular way had children in mind, but I will argue for an understanding by church communities of the capacity children have to experience God and will

suggest that the curation of sacred spaces with children is one particular outworking of the process of making visible God's work in creation. The spiritual experiences of children often go unrecognised but if we see children as active participants in the ongoing work of making God manifest, we will learn to see children not as very junior disciples but authentic expressions of the reality of the Kingdom of God.

The reference in the title of this Paper (NRSV, Matthew, ch.18.1) is to the deliberate selection by Jesus of a small child to illustrate the reality of God's kingdom. The incident of mothers bringing their children to Jesus to be blessed is recorded in all three synoptic gospels. Often people see Jesus' use of the image of the child as the promotion of the virtue of innocence. In Mark's gospel the account of this incident places the emphasis upon Jesus being accessible to all but particularly to those like the children in their innocence who have been brought before him. His response is indignant when the disciples try to turn the parents away (Wilson, 1962, p.810).

Matthew however, is concerned not with innocence but with humility among Jesus' followers. His teaching is for the ears of the early Christians struggling still with the Jewish tradition of rank and their own perceived lack of education in the face of the academic climate of Judaism at the time. For Matthew this is a demonstration not just of the heavenly realm where the last shall be first but also how the disciples should behave towards each other. The child is hailed as the ideal disciple. This disciple withstands the deception of those who profess to be clever and wise. It is to undermine the argument that clever people have all the answers (Stendahl, 1962, p.788). The same incident in Luke's Gospel is used specifically to demonstrate the contrast between the child and the self-righteous Pharisee in the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector which precedes it. The kingdom is not something to be earned by good works but to be received as a free and unconditional gift (Lampe, 1962, p.838).

Barclay's discussion of what Jesus means when he says that the Kingdom of God consists of those who are like children suggests a range of qualities: "a sense of wonder...unquestioning trust, instinctively to obey, to forgive, and to forget" This "childlike spirit" is the only way we gain entry to the kingdom (2001, pp.268-269). In his discussion of this pericope White makes a direct link between Jesus' radical teaching on the reality of the Kingdom of God and how this should be expressed in our churches:

> ...that children, whatever their age, are not only active participants in the unfolding story but are also essential for a true reading of the Gospel, understanding the identity and person of Jesus Christ, modelling the way of the cross, and representing the radical nature of ecclesial community (2008, p.356).

The popular construction of children as innocent suggests that they know nothing, have nothing to contribute until they are given resources by older and wiser people. White counters this perception by drawing upon the virtue of a childlike spirit, which for Barclay and White is not passive or empty but full of spiritual qualities that the church needs. Active participation is a challenge to worshipping communities when it comes to preparing and leading worship, particularly where children are concerned. To see children as role models for the whole worshiping community means children being involved in the generation of sacred spaces that make encounters possible with God and with each other in worship. Generating sacred spaces involves curation. An analogy can be drawn with the role of the curator in a museum or art gallery:

> The curator selects a work for exhibition and makes decisions about the context within which it will be displayed. This requires sensitivity to the interests and intentions of the artist. The

> curator also needs to ensure that the work is displayed in such a way that it is accessible and meaningful to the public. Furthermore, curators working within a museum environment, have an added responsibility to their institution. It is their role, along with conservators and art technicians, to delineate a comprehensive and accurate record of the artwork for the future (Oursler, 2004).

There are clear analogies to be drawn here: between the curator and the work of the worship leader or minister in preparing the space and the worship that will take place there; the artist and the written liturgy which will be interpreted by the minister, who may also be the artist; the institution of museum or gallery and the church and its traditions. In particular an analogy can be drawn with a continental spirituality that may be described as Catholic European, where an emphasis is given to the corporate and sacramental nature of worship. A new or recovered understanding of the relationship between theology and spirituality is seen as fundamental to the process of bringing something into being. Balthazar is one example of a theologian who has sought to recover the relationship between theology and spirituality by seeing that the shaping of believing communities through the truth revealed in divine teaching is a spiritual process, seeking “to hold the theological life of the community open to the transforming work of God” (McIntosh, 2010, p.402). Balthazar proposes an understanding of the Trinity where the persons of Father, Son and Spirit create space for each other “eternally delighting in the mutual fruition thus made possible” (p403). This can be likened to the process of curation where the work is only brought to fruition when space is allowed for others to enter and engage with the installation. In the curating of sacred spaces, people enter, engage, inhabit, but each person’s experience will be different and personal to them.

There is a shift in thinking now about how curation should happen. Where traditionally the purpose was to curate for others, now the move is to curate with others. Museums and art galleries are exploring co-curation with audiences as part of the learning process about the nature of the art work: “Co-curation is the active involvement of target audiences in all stages of exhibition development” (ecsite, 2011). This builds upon the concept that curation can never be complete until another has engaged with it to suggest that the relationship should begin at the start of the process of curation, so working with the other to co-curate in order that both curators and participants learn from the process. That curation can never be complete unless in relationship leads me to suggest a working definition for churches:

> Co-curation is the participation of the whole worshipping community in the practical process of making manifest the presence of God.

One year my daughter, then aged six, couldn't wait to tell me about the pilgrimage she had been on that morning with her animation group. They had explored the church: all of it. She dragged me in to show me. “And did I know that it's a big boat?” She pointed to the sails, the cross that is the mast, the open bricks and baskets with lights that were the fishing nets and baskets full of fish. “And we are on the boat!” No I had not seen any of that. Now, each time the Prayer in Taizé begins I feel we are setting sail.

Taizé has been described as a parable of community. Central to community life is the worship. The worship begins with the iconic ringing of the bells. People begin to flow into the church from every direction and find a place to sit on the floor. As the space fills there is a settling into the silence. It is as though we are all waiting expectantly for something to happen. The bells cease and there is a suspended

moment before a cantor begins to sing. The process of arriving, settling and waiting, is like the preparation for a voyage. Setting out into the deep waters of prayer with others of all ages, including the very young, evokes a parable of community where all are journeying together in worship but also journeying deep within themselves. Children are invited, not just as fellow pilgrims, but as guests of honour to sit with the prior of the community in the very centre of the church. The liturgy tells a story through the curation of objects and people and the shared experience of inhabiting sacred space. Taizé's spirituality is based on pilgrimage: it is what governs the community's faith, understanding of scripture and its hospitality. The curation of the church in Taizé has evolved over time to respond to the different cultural backgrounds of the pilgrims. The result is an invitation to journey in safety into the mystery of the incarnation. The curation of the sacred space with its sails and fishing baskets is an icon of the process of journeying.

Hospitable worship is reliant upon creating a public space or geography where the actions, rituals and rhythms enable any pilgrim on the journey to feel they are in a safe place. This is the role of the worship curator. Baker's research reports that the first job of a curator "is to open up a space where anyone can contribute on an equal level" (2010, p.31). The curator is guardian rather than leader in order to protect the opened up space in order to recover Jesus' teaching that God can work through anyone. Curation is also related directly to the purpose of liturgy, which is:

> ...to articulate a radical vision of hospitality and welcome around the table - this is deliberately in the face of and counter to the imagination of a world where only insiders are welcomed (2010, p.11).

Willimon (1979, pp.28-31) is concerned with the loss or undervaluing of the pastoral dimension of liturgy. In stating that "worship is a corporate and incorporating event" he sees that through the performance of ritual acts we are

enabled to situate ourselves differently: “We stand outside ourselves to better see ourselves.” It is “out of such experimental, playful, ritualised encounters” that we grow and flourish in the faith (pp.177-178). Ramshaw (1987) argues that liturgy, when seen as the work of one person, places the other in a child-parent relationship rather than as ‘co-travellers’ (p.18). The issue is a question of shared ownership for ritual acts, which can only be realised with wide and active participation (p.30). One purpose of liturgy and ritual acts is to encounter mystery. By seeing this as a co-operative enterprise there is a mutual recognition that what is being sought is something other: that God is present and at work (pp.33-35).

From another perspective on creating holy spaces, Billings (2004, p.174) writes of the need today to rediscover, an ‘Anglican aesthetic’, posing the rhetorical question: “do Anglicans believe that God is ‘beautiful’ and therefore God is *best* expressed in beauty?” Like Baker he sees the need for enriched public worship, begging people to come and see and encounter God. To achieve this, creative attention needs to be paid to “a more holistic account of human spirituality,” where “all our senses will be involved, and our imagination, and our affections (p.174). This paper will go on to explore the ideas raised about a need to enrich our corporate worship through my experiences of co-curating with children.

Understanding children's spirituality as a teacher and a priest

As a secondary school teacher before ordained ministry my pedagogy drew upon Vygotsky's "zones of proximal development" where all those in the classroom are perceived by each other as persons with experience and knowledge (Mercer, 2005, p.171). Vygotsky, founded a sociocultural theory of teaching and learning where the environment invites students "to participate in a process of negotiation and co-construction of knowledge" (Haenen et al, 2003, p.246).

In 1988 the seminal report of the British Council of Churches Consultative Group on Ministry among Children heralded a thorough re-examination of church practice in its work with children. Seventeen recommendations were made. In particular, chapter 3 explores the two inherited models of nurturing children in the faith: the school model and the family model, before advocating a pilgrim model where all in the church community: adults and children, learn from "shared experience and shared stories" (p.34).

My previous experience in education was governed by the demands of lesson plans, targets, aims and objectives, differentiation and a neat wrapping up at the end to demonstrate to the students what I hoped they had learnt. The normative pedagogy of classroom practice is seen as one of outcome, with success that can be quantified. Throughout my teaching career the advice to achieve this prescriptive style of lesson was to be a big presence in the classroom, to be the centre or locus of authority. It encouraged a 'teacher knows it all or teacher knows best' mentality. This is an example of advice given to new teachers:

> Just like the animal kingdom, there is a pecking order in the classroom. If you want to be a successful teacher you have got to make sure that you fully understand your need to assert control. You also need to be aware of the most effective ways of doing this (TES, 2012).

The problem is that the secular model for children's education is the reality for the church's teaching with adults and children. It is too often an unequal relationship build upon a sort of telling power, that this is the story, this is what to believe. Adults, who have grown up with this model pass it on.

However, Vygotsky's cultural model of educational theory counters this traditional model of school education that according to Kozulin (2003, p.2) promotes empirical over theoretical learning. Kozulin uses 'empirical' and 'theoretical' here to illustrate the learning value given to the acquisition of information that can be quantified as opposed to the learning about how facts are arrived at. Increasingly, educationalists are promoting the wisdom of Vygotsky in seeing cognitive development as "...an acquisition of symbolic tools" for a child's "imagination and emotional development" (2003, p.4-5). In 2010, SACRE: the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education, published its new syllabus for RE in schools. Influences of Vygotsky can clearly be discerned in its approach to teaching RE today, with an emphasis on "enquiring", "investigating", understanding", "questioning", "exploring" and "reflecting' as the learning vehicles to "developing.... [their] own sense of identity in terms of beliefs and values" ((Rotherham Agreed Syllabus for 2011, pp.6-10).

The family model for church involves the role of parent, that is, those working directly with children and by extension the whole adult worshiping community, and the role of the child in the community, which by extension can also include adults who are seekers or new to the faith. This 'child' group is treated specially and differently to the adult group. Focussing upon the church as family and therefore constructing the nurture of younger members of the church within a familial framework seems obvious and The *Children in the Way* report (BCCCG, 1988, pp. 74-5) outlines the scriptural rationale for a family centred approach to the discipleship of children.

Mercer's research amongst congregations in North America concludes that the responsibility for the care of children is the work of the whole church, not just mothers and women (2005, p.237). Mercer dreams of a utopian church where "It's liturgical, missional, and community life represent[s] common struggle and celebration among all - including children" where everything that happens there happens with and not for children (p.242). There are many suggestions for good practice arising from Mercer's research but these still conform to what makes a good church family rather than what it is to be a disciple on the road. It is constructed as "doing good church" (p.243) but where is it going?

For Beckwith (2004) nurturing children in the local church community means paying attention to the post modern child born into a world that is "experience oriented" where, as spiritual people, "they want to experience God, not just learn about God (p.31). Beckwith insists that "Children are never intruders in our corporate worship of God" (p.161). However, in responding to Jesus' child as a sign of the character of the new Kingdom a new ethical response necessitates not simply an acceptance of children as full participants in our worship of God but that we all need to become like children to fully experience God.

However, the *Children in the Way* scriptural survey concludes that the family model is only one part of the story. The report points out that the Bible's more frequently used social construct is of the wider community of Israel and of the church. These are used both physically and symbolically to express the story of the Creator God's relationship with his people. The question then remains for me of how far the Church has come since the publication of *Children in the Way* in 1988?

The pilgrim model is fundamental to the history of the people of God. Much of the biblical writers' reflections upon a relationship with God suggest that it is at times of journeying when the people are closest to God; where trust in God's guidance and saving grace is key. The whole people of God without differentiation, are journeying together: "Being the pilgrim people means that all are called to the journey, and all

involved in the teaching and learning on the way" (BCCCG, 1988, pp.76-77). Adopting a pilgrim model means accepting that children are also called to journey together as part of the body of Christ. When the whole worshiping community journeys together we learn from each other about what it means to be part of that body. Corsaro's sociological study of childhood (2011) offers the idea of "interpretive reproduction" to describe "the innovative and creative aspects of children's participation in society" (p.20). Children don't just internalise the society and culture around them, they are "actively contributing to cultural production and change" (p. 21). The problem is that in many of our worshiping communities we do not recognise the value of what children can contribute to the journey, not as yet to be realised proper Christians but as fellow pilgrims. Corsaro continues by exploring "the importance of language and cultural routines and the reproductive nature of children's evolving membership in their culture" (p.21). This inhabiting of the language of the culture and its routines, which together shape the development of that culture, applies as much if not more so to the society of the church community.

Perham (2000) speaks of the Church's failure "to find a formula that integrates all ages" (p.86) and outlines four working principles:

1. That children "belong to the liturgy...by virtue of their baptism, to the Church of today."
2. That children "belong at the altar, sharing the sacrament."
3. That children need not be absent from the liturgy because of its demands in terms of wonder, awe and mystery. For they have these in greater measure than adults."
4. That children need to "both see the action and be part of it" (pp.86-87).

By children participating fully in worship with the rest of the community their sense of belonging is reinforced, they begin to inhabit the sacred space and learn through ritual acts a sense of the pattern or road map of worship as a journey.

Rebecca Nye uses the term: 'relational consciousness' to describe the core spirit of the child (2006, p.109). In her action research in two Midlands primary schools, Nye identifies this core theme of spirituality existing along all parts of a continuum from that of children with no religious experience to those with some. The core value presented was the revelation of the child in relation to self, or to others, or to God, or to the supernatural. In trying to express deep feelings the children struggled with the limitations of language but their responses were always 'in relationship with'. As Christians we are called to be in relationship. This is fundamental to the concept of the Creator God who calls us to be in relationship with him and with each other. Indeed, David Hay sees Nye's identification of relational consciousness as the key outcome of her practical research into children's spirituality. It is "a way out of the straitjacket that currently binds our ethical and religious institutions" (p.172). This is what I am trying to achieve in this context. where I am now the curate (traditionally the ordained person who had the cure or care of the souls in the parish) and one whose task is to curate the sacred space and the liturgy to enable worship to happen because this is fundamental to the pastoral care of the worshipping community. This is the context.

The commuter village of Foxton lies eight miles to the South of Cambridge off the A10 and with a station on the London rail line. There are vestiges of its agricultural past but the population has grown to 1,400 in the last ten years with new private housing, school, village hall and sports pavilion. St Laurence's church is in the centre of the village and its south side faces the recreation field and new buildings. There is no church hall or room. A traditional Sunday School, meets in the village hall at the same time as the main service but there is no joining up. The children are dropped off by parents who do not then come to church. The numbers of children attending have dwindled to a handful but the leaders are very reluctant to consider other models of ministry with children. The Sunday School at Foxton clings to a school model. One Sunday a month there is a Family Service and the Sunday

School does not meet but prepares something for the service. Two families occasionally attend and some months there are no children at all. Foxton, like countless other parish churches, sees the Family Service as an invitation to families, but is limited by this vision and by a narrow understanding of liturgy which suggests that only a very simple liturgy is hospitable to families. The congregation is welcoming and generally supportive of new ideas, provided, like the Sunday School, it does not have to change. Education in mind and body is highly valued by an aspirational village population but the lack of attendance at Sunday School and Family Services suggest either a lack of interest in Christian spirituality or a rejection of what is currently offered.

The importance of children's ministry in Foxton is that there are 100 children in the village primary school alone, whose spiritual needs are not being met by the current Sunday School model and the Sunday worship in church. The age demographic of the regular attendance at Sunday worship shows the following:

0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71-80	81+
3 (5)	2	0	2	5	6	10	10	6

The bracketed number shows the Sunday School average. The three church attenders in the lowest age group do not attend the Sunday School. The Sunday School leaders do not understand why these children are not sent to them instead of being in church with their parents. The profile shows that without significant change the worshiping community will dwindle away.

When invited by a school to lead a Prayer Walk for Year 6's I first invited the children to look up, down or out to find something they would like to focus on. We stood in silence for a minute to allow each child to consider their object or thing in their own way then I invited one of the children to read a prayer. Three very reluctant boys began to take an interest because the prayer was quirky and had an amusing cartoon illustration. We passed the grave of a nine-year-old boy. The children

wanted to talk about death, sharing their thoughts and memories. We moved on to objects ranging from the religious to those with no obvious connotations. I asked the children to choose one and to find a quiet space to sit and to let their object speak to them. There was an intentional choosing of a quiet space alone in the long grass. The silence extended to several minutes and when called the children drifted back and thoughtfully laid their objects down. What was interesting was the seriousness with which the children reflected afterwards upon the experience. A paradigm shift appeared to have taken place from the everyday and sceptical to a more spiritual dimension. How had this come about? No demands were made on the children to do or to be. They were given space to reflect on their own in whatever way they wished. The importance for children's ministry in this context is that we were all learning together, journeying together, inhabiting a space which became intentionally sacred through ritual and prayer and where story unfolded so that this became our shared story. The bonds created spoke of the covenant between God and his people.

Vanier (1979, p.42) describes community as covenant: "To enter into a covenant is to discover that there are bonds between us and our God, that we are made to be his children and to live in his light. We are called to the divine wedding feast." It not only makes demands on each person to be responsible for others in the community but it is also accepting that we are vulnerable and weak and need to be carried by others. This covenantal relationship is a relationship that flows between us and God and each other. Vanier insists that in entering into this covenant we enter into the heart of God and God's heart rests with the poor, the weak, the vulnerable (p.42). This is true, but part of a new ethical framework of co-curation with children must be to see the child in full and equal partnership. A reorientation of ecclesial practice would see that we must all become like children to enter the kingdom of heaven. Not because children are weak and vulnerable but because they are more authentically themselves. They have not unlearned, lost or forgotten their innate spirituality.

David Hay (1990, pp.32-39) argues that we are all innately spiritual but our sense of this becomes lost as we grow up. As a church therefore we need to help people of all ages to rediscover this core spirituality. Hay describes religious experiences as self-authenticating. Each is valid in and of itself without recourse to external factors to give justification to the experience. My own childhood encounter with God, the religious experiences of the children on the Prayer Walk and in Godly Play sessions in Foxton are authentic expressions that do not need any external justification. Hay states that the focus of researchers should be on the "perceptions, awareness and response of children" to ordinary activities which may signal moments of transcendence (p.60). I searched for a vehicle to create more spiritual opportunities in my ministry with children. Messy Church is the normative children's ministry in my benefice. The monthly session at one of the other churches involves pre-prepared activities around a common theme. An adult sits at each table to introduce and lead the activity and to explain what its significance is in relation to the theme. A story comes at the end, told to the children and serving as a summary of what has been done. The focus is on what has been learnt from the session. The school and family models can be discerned here but there is little sense of pilgrimage or experiential learning where adults and children may set out together to explore the theme in a spirit of adventure and enquiry.

My first experience of Godly Play was with a group of three and four-year-olds using the Parable of the Good Shepherd. I did not look at the children but sensed throughout their absorption with the objects. There was a gasp when the wolf was tossed down between the good shepherd and the sheep. During the wondering questions phase that followed one little boy talked about his Gran who had died. Though the story did not mention death, the presence of the wolf, the prospect of being lost and the actions of the good shepherd in saving the sheep, led to the boy's

thought that his Gran was not lost but safe. As a first experience of the power of this style of story-telling my feelings were of elation. It worked! But what worked?

In Godly Play the children and I become co-curators of a ritual. Godly Play involves the rituals of story telling and the ritual of objects. A Godly Play session begins with a story presentation where all present sit together on the floor in a circle. The spirit of enquiry begins immediately with the act of revealing the objects that will play a part in the story and what they may represent. Wondering questions are key. The focus of what is being learnt shifts from the teacher or leader to the objects at the centre of the story. The session involves all present focusing upon the objects as the story evolves. The leader does not look at the children but follows his/her own movements with the objects. Very little eye contact is made during the story presentation: "keeping your own eyes on the material in the center of the circle will help you 'disappear' into the story it embodies" (Berryman, 2002, p.57).

The presentation concludes with more open-ended 'wondering' questions, such as 'I wonder if we took a bit of this story away would it make any difference?' Here the sense of journeying together to enter deeply into the mystery of the story is at the heart of what takes place at Godly Play. There follows an unprescribed creative play session where some children may opt to play with the story objects, often re-telling in their own way, while others may choose to paint or model. The purpose is not to make something in order to take home but to explore through imaginative play.

One of my Godly Play sessions involves the pre school class in Foxton. The first session saw fifteen three and four year olds, four staff and two parents arrive at the big church door and hesitantly walk down the big steps into the church. A rug was laid on the tiles between the choir stalls, and set out on a low table before the altar rails were a cross, candle, the Holy Family, a 'clock' of the church year and a wooden

duck. We lit the candle and I talked about my duck being a very special present from my Mum. Slowly the children talked about their special presents. Then I began the Godly Play story presentation of The Creation. Again, all the children followed the story and were very keen to share which 'day' they liked the best. Some very messy creative play followed in the nave of the church then we reformed in the chancel for the feast of biscuits, grapes and juice. Sitting and eating on the rug together, one little boy said in delight: "it's like a birthday picnic!' I thought of the Creation. One of the children blew out the candle. Four weeks later and the children were back, but no hesitation this time. They walked straight up the aisle, picked up a mat and sat on the rug waiting expectantly. The ritual was established.

Nouwen, in writing about creative ministry, describes teaching as a redemptive process where the teacher depends completely on the student to "give trust. confidence and friendship" (1978, p.12). The future becoming present in the teaching relationship here and now. My experience has been exactly this, and through a relationship that I could not conceive as possible with children I did not know or who were so young. In Godly Play story-telling I have to let go and entrust the session to the children. I do not know where it will lead. It is like setting out on a journey. It is a process of shared discovery: a pilgrimage.

In my ministry I am learning to offer and then to let go. At our weekly after school Godly Play session a pattern or ritual has emerged. The children call the session Come and C at Half Past Three. They rush in for snacks and free play while the parents have a cup of tea. The church becomes an adventure playground. Then we move through the 'door' provided by the rood screen separating the nave from the chancel. The children usually decide when they are ready for this. After the story presentation and creative play to follow, the children have begun the ritual of 'reading the news.' In their imaginations they saw the potential of facing choir stalls

as TV studio and viewers at home. These children are just five so not able to write sentences yet, but they decorate sheets of A4 paper to look like writing and hold them up to look professional. A big focus is always the weather, but bits of the Godly Play story begin to emerge. This became more pronounced when the desert bag was used to tell the stories of Abraham and Sarah, Moses and the people of God. The children were giving us their versions of the stories again in their news. We learnt lots more about how hot and cold and dry and dangerous the desert can be, and always to be avoided unless you absolutely have to go there.

To what extent is co-curating contributing to co-creation?

Telling my story and the Church's story of ministry with children is steeped in the tradition of the story of God's people as pilgrims. But this needs to go further. Becoming pilgrims is what we are called to do. But we are also called to walk this journey in relationship with God and with each other in community. Co-curation is an outward sign of this journey in progress. The theology underpinning co-curation is one of process. Process theologians draw upon the ideas of Alfred North Whitehead in the first half of the twentieth century who describes God as "the great companion" (Buckley, 2005, p.215).

Epperley describes process theology as a doctrine of creation that sees God growing with the world and that our true destiny is with God as co-creators (2011, p. 12). Process theologians challenge traditional thinking about God's relationship with the world where God is understood as sovereign, perfect and changeless. instead, God is understood as "a process-relational God" (p.28) where God's relationship with the world he has created is "intimate and continuous". But this relationship, though "wholly present" is none-the-less unrestrained by the world God has created (pp.28-29). According to Epperley the task of the process theologian is to be "ultimately experiential, holistic and relational" (2011, p.155). Key to the creative process is that we can experience God with everything we do, not just at moments when apart from everyday life. The choice God offers in the process of creation therefore is to ensure our spiritual practices give opportunities for us to fully experience God's vision for each of us in the particular moment as well as part of a life time (2011, p.48).

Co-curation therefore is part and parcel of process theology as defined by Epperley. Curation is not a product it is a process. That we are all pilgrims is significant. The value I have found in co-travelling is a Christian spirituality embodied in the concept of pilgrimage and of participation in ritual acts which informs a

theology of co-curation where the active participation of the whole worshipping community is involved in the practical process of making manifest the presence of God. That we are all pilgrims is in keeping with Nye et al's spirituality, and in particular, that Godly Play is in keeping with the pilgrim model. My work with children through Godly Play has shown that the spiritual experiences of children are as credible as for any adult and that children naturally inhabit sacred spaces and contribute to making God manifest. We are co-curators participating in curation together, a process that insists upon the relational nature of worship: not worship for but worship with. This relational aspect allows for spontaneity and freedom of expression because co-curation is the practical process of co-creation: the dynamic of God with us, with each other. Not allowing this to happen in our ministry with children is to say that children cannot participate fully in the process that is creation.

Conclusions

My reflexive research approach through journalling is in keeping with the thesis of process as a fellow pilgrim in the ongoing work of creation. Swinton and Mowat (2006, p.34) define reflexive knowing as the deliberate attention researchers give to "their own processes of constructing the world, with the goal of saying something fresh and new about that personal (or shared) world." Two types of reflexivity are identified and they are fundamental to my practical research in parish ministry. Firstly, a personal reflexivity where a previous career as a teacher, a spirituality informed by the Christian Community of Taizé and my calling to the priesthood together are part of an ongoing story: "that all research is, to an extent, autobiography" (p.60). Secondly, an epistemological reflexivity where my own story is part of the developing story and "involved with the research process, not as a distant observer, but as an active participant and co-creator of the interpretive experience" (2006, p.35). Reflexive knowing has provided the framework for me to ask questions about my own theological assumptions. Swinton and Mowat see reflexivity as a natural part of the researcher's role, where researcher and participant are essential to each other:

> While the researcher's primary task is to describe the encounter, in reality, she is inevitably a *co-creator* of the mode and content of the encounter. More than that, she is implicitly or explicitly, a co-creator of the narrative that is the product of the research encounter (2006, p.61).

My method of journalling is further in keeping with a co-curation as fundamental to a theology of process by paying attention to my participation while focusing upon the joint effort of making God manifest. Journalling allows my voice *and* the voice of the

children to be heard. I have learnt so much about spirituality from this journey, which further informs and affirms the spirituality I have found in Taizé.

This initial study suggests the importance for the church of research into co-curation with children and its wider application for the whole worshipping community. The reality however, is the need for the willingness of adults to see their ministry with children as a spiritual process, not a means to an end product. The challenge is the educating of other adults to return to their own childhood experiences and for the church to overcome the obstacles of generating sufficient adults to co-curate with children.

Finally, this thesis runs counter to the current ecclesial trend, which increasingly mirrors the product-based managerialism of Western society. Messy Church is an example of this trend where it is too often promoted as the best way to do children's ministry but where the focus is upon preparing activities for children to produce rather than as a process of co-curating and inhabiting a sacred space with children. There is a need to liberate children from this straight-jacketed approach to their participation in the worshipping community. A way forward to how we relate to children and the kinds of worship we envisage to exercise this relationship may be found in process theology, where in this context it may provide a liberation theology for children. Godly Play becomes therefore, more than simply a tool or vehicle for working with children but may be seen as part of the sacramental life of the church, that in Godly Play we inhabit sacred space.

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Why Co-curate Worship With Children?

"...the practical-theological action always has the goal of interacting with situations and challenging practices in order that individuals and communities
can be enabled to remain faithful to God and to participate faithfully in God's continuing mission in the world."
(Swinton and Mowat 2006, p.237.)

Introduction

It is apparent from the advertisements and profiles of congregations in the Church of England looking for new clergy (Church Times, 2014) that appointing priests who can grow their churches with children and young people is seen to be a priority. As an Anglican priest I understand this pressure. Discipleship of the young has never been more talked or written about. In 1988 *Children in the Way* was published, establishing the need for new directions in children's ministry. The report explored and rejected school and family models of being church with children in favour of a pilgrim church model, where "all the members are engaged in some joint venture (1998, pp.33-34). A 1991 Churches Together in Britain and Ireland report addressed the 'unfinished business' of this and other previous work highlighting the issues of nurturing the faith of children and teenagers in today's churches.

However, the report concluded that adult members were reluctant to welcome children into their worship (CGMC, 1991, p.42). To counter this unwillingness the report recommended a model of 'The Child as Church' as a way forward in enabling worshipping communities to see that welcoming and becoming like children is a kingdom imperative:

> that being a child is not a choice of weakness or passivity but is a way of interacting with others and responding to the world…the Church as a child

> is dependent on God, receiving grace and blessings as a gift and living in trust (p.60).

Becoming like children was seen in 1991 as important and even necessary for church growth. In February 2010 the most recent report on children and church was presented to the General Synod of the Church of England. *Going for Growth* suggests there has been little change at parish level in the years between 1988 and now well into the twenty-first century. The situation presented in the 2010 report is that, despite the obvious desire of churches to want to grow, they cannot let go of their adult world view in order to welcome children:

> Churches lack the humility to face the truth about the quality of their life and worship and to set about addressing the needs which are then identified. A church which welcomes children (and young people), accepts their gifts and ministries, meets their needs, advocates justice, seeks new life, challenges evil with love and truth, and continues to learn the values of the Kingdom by living them, is a Church which is good news not only for its members but for the world (Church of England Archbishop's Council Education Division 2010, p.2).

Though this most recent report does not advocate any specific model, implicit within this judgement is still the need for adults to let go and allow the Church itself to become like a child. A pilgrim church model is also implied in the call for churches to reflect "our own relationship with God and each other, whilst recognising the freedom of the individual to choose whether or not to engage with them (2010.p.9).

As a parish priest I experience congregations reluctant to engage with children in worship. As a practical theologian I am challenging a tradition of formation and discipleship that does not see children at the centre of its worship. The argument to make is that by welcoming children we might all become like children in spirit. It is through the worshipping life of a community that its values are reflected, and which underpin the rest of its life. Yet it is in worship that parishes seems to find it hardest to accept the gifts and ministries of children. The gap in knowledge and understanding is how to be with children in intergenerational worship. This paper explores co-curation as being one way to practice worship with children. Co-curation may be summarised as the participation of the whole worshipping community in the process of creating worship. It requires worship to be prayer-full, care-full and over-accepting of the least of those present for it to work.

Part 1

An introduction to key themes and concepts

The case that worship with children can be practice of 'co-curation' is informed by three key concepts: worship as liturgical prayer, worship as care and worship as 'overaccepting' (Wells, 2004). By seeing worship as liturgical prayer the focus shifts from something that is done for us or that we do by ourselves, to a state of being with God and with each other in relationship through ritual acts. By seeing worship as care the focus shifts from 'what will I get from this' to 'what can I give to God and to the others here with me'. Being in relationship also means giving away, or losing ourselves in order to meet the needs of others. Overaccepting is a means to achieve this with children.

Worship as Liturgical Prayer

Worship may be defined in many ways but to define worship as common prayer is to affirm a primary focus of worship as being together with God. The Church of England states the importance of worship to Christian communities: "It is in worship that we express our theology and define our identity. It is through encountering God within worship that we are formed (and transformed) as his people". The ways that worship is often expressed is through its liturgy. "Liturgy refers to the patterns, forms, words and actions through which public worship is conducted" (Church of England, 2014). For Christians, worshipping God may have at its heart the desire to be changed or transformed more and more into the likeness of God. The patterning of worship through liturgical action is regarded by the Church as an effective way of worshipping to achieve such a transformation.

Liturgical worship provides a vehicle for expressing faith in God, according to Weil, and may be transformative in quality (2002, p.74). Perham sees prayer and worship as inseparable, where those present are drawn into the spirit to achieve "a prayerfulness that will give the liturgy both life and depth" (2010, pp.28-31). As well as prayerfulness, used well, liturgical action is imbued with drama, a drama that all can enter into. Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin describe Christian worship as "the enactment of the dramatic story of the triune God by the people of God" (2014, p. 34). This definition they argue reminds us that worship is "1) primarily God-centred, 2) dialogical, 3) enacted, 4) storied, and 5) practised by the people of God - the Church" (p.34).

In Taizé emphasis is given to creating liturgical worship that is beautiful. The beauty is seen to be expressed in waiting in the spirit: 'the beauty of community prayer…. [which] can allow young people to let the desire for God to well up in them, and also enter into the depths of contemplative waiting" (Brother Roger, Taizé, 2010, p.61). The term 'community prayer' is used here rather than 'worship' to describe its corporate liturgical acts. In doing so Taizé shifts the focus onto a mode of being with God.

It is possible therefore to describe worship as liturgical prayer. Weil sees the importance of liturgical action to the idea of the beauty of common prayer in the same way as Brother Roger, stating: "this is simply to say that the criteria for beauty plays an important role in the external dimensions of liturgical prayer" (2002, p.75). Liturgical prayer in its fulness creates beauty: a sacred space where ritual; theatre; story, and mystery combine to evoke the kingdom of God. But this means welcoming children into the unfolding drama too. Liturgical prayer is focused upon expressing holiness: that we are holy as God is holy. To see worship as liturgical prayer allows for a renewed focus upon creativity and wonder, where the whole worshipping community becomes like a child. Co-curation works best within the context of liturgical prayer.

Worship as Care

The second step to co-curating is to see that care involves being in relationship with others. Care is a defining feature of Church of England ministry, firstly in the very inclusive remit of all those residing in the parish (Church of England, 2014). But secondly, in its worshipping communities.

In the past the word was 'cure', the root of curation and curate. The priest is charged at ordination with the cure of souls: "to be with God with the people on your heart" during times of ordered worship and in the daily life of the priest (Ramsey, 1985, p.16). The cure or care is focused upon the spiritual wellbeing, nurturing and pastoral care of others. Spiritual care happens on behalf of the whole community in common prayer or worship: "So today the ordained priest is called to reflect the priesthood of Christ and to serve the priesthood of the people of God" (1985, p.111). It is important to see therefore that pastoral care is not distinct from worship but enacted through worship. However, spiritual care is not restricted to the priest or minister but is the task of the whole worshipping community.

Being a 'care provider' inevitably involves and requires an awareness of power issues. That is the extent to which care is provided or bestowed versus care achieved in a shared enterprise. Strandenaes' article (2004, p.3) sees pastoral

power as “a power of care…that manifests itself in the diligence, dedication and endless attention to all.” In focusing upon care we may be unaware that in the role of caring we may also be controlling. Pastoral power is always present when nurturing the spirituality of others, particularly children. If worship is shared, care is also shared. We must accept the view that we are spiritually nurtured by the least of those present and not through a hierarchical model of worship leading.

Worship as care then is seeing the worshipping community as collegial and relational in intention: open to the receiving or bestowing of care from each other. If children are excluded from worship then care cannot be given to them or received from them. The relational aspect in care for the other is the second characteristic of effective co-curation.

Worship as Overaccepting

The final step to co-curating is driven by the Christian ethical principle of ‘the first shall be last’. For the Church to become like a child means giving way to children. Sam Wells describes an incident at a concert where the pianist is put off his performance by a child running around the auditorium. He stands away from the piano uncertain how to continue. The child runs on to the stage, climbs on the stool and begins to sound the keys. The pianist comes behind the child and placing his hands either side begins to play in response to her discordant notes, weaving them into his own to improvise a new melody (2004, p.131). The pianist could have walked off or had the child removed, overwhelmed by his loss of status in public. By choosing to work with the situation through an act of radical generosity something new and beautiful was brought into being.

Overaccepting is generous, self-less action, not passive acceptance or selfish rejection in response to the presence of others who may unsettle the status quo. It is an active way of receiving that enables one to retain both identity and relevance. It is a way of accepting without losing the initiative. This often involves a change of status (2004, p.131). What it is easy to do as church is either simply accept the norms of the world and incorporate them into our way of doing things or turn our backs on or block things that don't seem to fit with our way. Wells argues that we need to do the harder thing which is to ‘*over* accept’ and by doing so develop a distinctive ethical model for the Church today. Responding to the radical nature of Jesus's teaching through the practical approach of overaccepting can help worshipping communities to focus their mission and witness in the world. Christians are called to imitate the character of God. Wells states that "overaccepting imitates

the manner of God's reign" (2004, p.134.) Williams sees this as an imperative for all who follow Christ:

> To belong in the apostolic community is to be involved in a complex act of giving away: to be at the disposal of God's will, to give away the life we have, so that God's life can be given through us" (1994, p. 257).

The idea is that the Church can only truly be the Church if it exists within an expression of poverty. If we accept children at the centre of worship, we are overaccepting by making ourselves poor. Seeing worship as liturgical prayer and care are helpful steps in learning to overaccept in worship. Being *together* with God in relationship with all those present means seeing the other, particularly the least, and putting their needs first.

Co-curating Liturgical Prayer

Curation is primarily about the care of the objects or art entrusted to the curator. Good curation allows the works themselves to speak, not the curator. Co-curating worship draws upon recent developments in the art and museum world where education has become more important in the process of curation: "Co-curation is the active involvement of target audiences in all stages of exhibition development" (ecsite, 2011). So not simply displaying objects for the public to view and experience but involving the public from the beginning of the curation. The viewers become participants in the curation and by doing so enter into the the world of the objects themselves. There is an invitation to enter into dialogue with the objects as the installation is developed and brought to fulfilment. Experience in the world of museum curation has shown that the public are leading the way and that this is driving museums to changing their own practices:

> Visitors will always be ahead of us in following their knowledge, tastes and proclivities. And, importantly for us, this provides an opportunity for us to move our collections and storytelling closer to them" (Boon, 2011, p.3).

One aspect learnt from co-curation is that museums identify their own needs and then include 'lay' participants in delivering them. The most important ethic here is that the contributions made are taken seriously rather than simply seeing these as the work of an amateur consumer:

> “Successful co-curation needs the museum to be clear on both its goals and the ways in which the museum would be improved by working more directly with the public
> (20011, p.5).

The idea of curating worship was first explored by Baker who states: the first job of a curator is “...to open up a space where anyone can contribute on an equal level” (2010, p.31). Baker’s egalitarian approach to creating worship was born out of the fresh expression or emerging church movement. It is still seen as experimental and not a feature of parish church Sunday worship. But if the aim of all worship curation is to create a medium where people can come close to God then parish church worship can learn from the experience of Baker and others in this field.

One desired outcome of co-curating worship is the building of community. The term 'worship curator' was coined by Pierson who argues for a new language to express the process of curation (2012, pp.54-124). However, Pierson’s concern is still worship leader focused. He speaks of collaboration but the worship leader is still essentially the provider, the one in control: “it allows me to shape a worship event with both internal and external integrity while still being open ended in the ways I think worship should be". Pierson sees curating worship as holding the overview of the worship event, "aggregating" and "pruning", to do the best he or she can within the limitations of what is available "to present these elements to the congregation" (2012, pp.33-38). Pierson's view of worship curation here may be of presentation and of power which would seem to mitigate against the building of community.

Though described as new and experimental as an approach to preparing worship Pierson’s model of curation is traditional in the sense that worship has always been prepared or curated beforehand by a few key people. This paper however, argues for a new ethical response to this received view of the role of curator, and much more in keeping with the movement towards a collegial approach in secular curation. Worship curation needs to change from one person in a position of power presenting for the congregation, to curating with the congregation, that is co-curation, if we are going to create liturgical prayer that will enable all who take part to enter more deeply as a spiritual experience.

There is a second and important point to make about co-curation in the art world that is important for worshipping communities. Co-curation is not about getting ready for worship it is about bringing something into being. Co-curating liturgical prayer happens through the participation of all those present throughout the event.

Elements may be pre planned and prepared but there is always a sense of the provisional, the spontaneous: of work in progress.

The pianist and child in Well's anecdote is an example of co-curation. The pianist responds to the intervention of the child to create something new. The new is experienced by all those present. In liturgical prayer, co-curation is seeing the congregation not merely as participants in an event that has been prepared for them but as co-curators fully participating in an unfolding drama. In this way co-curation may be seen to be the outworking of the Christian pastoral and ethical contexts to care and to overaccept. In worship it is possible to achieve a theology of overacceptance through the practice of co-curation because "Worship is enacted by the people of God - *all* the people of God" (Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin 2014, p. 42). What is being described here is an example of the pilgrim model where there is no hierarchy. To enact is to bring into being. Co-curating liturgical prayer is focused upon being rather than doing, which, it may be argued, is an equally important aspect of the learning experience. This raises questions about learning by being which will be examined in Part 3. In summary, co-curating worship is a means of learning together by being together as fellow pilgrims in aspiring to the kingdom goal of the Church as Child. The concepts of worship as liturgical prayer, worship as care and overacceptance are important to the journey towards this goal.

Part 2

Why Co-curate Worship - *with Children*?

From the previous discussion, it can be seen that co-curating worship is worth considering. This section will look at why it is important for children to be present in worship and how co-curation can contribute to effective intergenerational worship. There are four reasons why it is important that children are present in worship. These are that children are signs of the kingdom; intergenerational worship is not obviously seen as part of children's ministry; children are agents for transformation; it is unethical to exclude children from worship with the rest of the community.

A Sign of the Kingdom

In co-curating worship with children we enact a kingdom imperative. The central question discussed by Crossan in his exegesis of Mark's Gospel, is how Mark may be seen to challenge the twelve disciples as leaders of the Church. Crossan suggests that Mark's vision is "an exaltation of the nameless over the named" (2012, p.175). The named leaders of the Church come and go, leaving behind a not always creditable legacy because they did not exercise leadership in the way Jesus had taught them. When Jesus places the child in their midst the child represents the nameless, the servant, the powerless. Those who are named, who have power are no longer holding centre stage.

Secondly, we can see this Gospel incident as an example of overaccepting. Enabling children to be at the centre of the common prayer of the church may be the starting point for the whole worshipping community to become like children. The worship then becomes a parable of the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus's injunction that we must become like this child to inherit the kingdom (Matt.18.1).

Children's Ministry in Practice

If the argument is made that accepting children at the centre of worship is a necessary means to us all becoming like a child, and that this is a kingdom imperative, we need to consider why parishes still struggle with the concept. The national Church has been raising concerns about children's ministry since the time of the introduction in the 1980's of new liturgy in England: first the *Alternative Service Book* (1980) and then *Common Worship* (2000). In 1988 the report: *Children in the Way* was published. This extensively researched document concluded that the operant Sunday School model was no longer fit for the purpose of expressing

children as full members of the church by their baptism and fellow pilgrims on the journey with the rest of the people of God. Further reports, for example: *The Child in the Church* (BCC,1984), *Children and Holy Communion* (BCC, 1989) and *Going for Growth* (2010) continued to press the argument for a fundamental shift in understanding the place of children in the Church and in church. The problem is, that though the need for change is well documented, it still seems very removed from the reality of children's ministry at local level.

There is always a time lag in disseminating new ideas and practices but the real difficulty lies in changing hearts, minds and behaviours. Co-curation may provide a new vision and strategic approach to changing practice: "at best, Christian nurture focuses on the creation and provision of the most enabling conditions and opportunities for the child's development in faith, understanding, witness and service" (CGMC,1991, p.34). Enabling children to be full participants in their worshipping communities means radical transformation: "It is not enough for the churches to be concerned about attracting children to worship or to the organisations they run…the churches today are called to take new risks and to change in attitude and activity towards and with children in a faithful response to God" (1991, p.69).

What may be needed today however, is to take new risks by rediscovering our liturgical roots. Weil (2002) seeks to rediscover the baptismal ecclesiology of the early Church where liturgy was seen to be the work of the whole congregation. For Weil the Laos or laity includes children, who demonstrate a capacity to come close to God that adults find difficult. Children demonstrate that there is nothing sentimental about receiving God's kingdom like a child but just what Jesus calls us to do. Weil describes children as "naturally liturgical beings" because they become involved with the whole of themselves. What is lacking in children is the repression of adults. In worship they are capable of being "agents for its transformation into an authentically inclusive model and one that embraces all ages and all stages of human development" (pp.106-107). What children may bring to worship that we can all recover is a way of being: of playing; creating; entering; learning, and improvising that as adults we may have left behind.

The term 'children's ministry' is well known in church circles, for example where churches are offering Messy Church, Godly Play, Junior Church, holiday clubs and other nurturing groups. The implication in the use of this term is ministry to children. And yet, 'women's ministry' is also a well used term. In liberation theology, it has largely been accepted that the ministry of women, ordained and lay, is valid and just. The Church has never used the term women's ministry to mean ministry *to* women, but ministry *by* women. What would it mean therefore for the Church to see

children's ministry as ministry *by* children? The problem may be seen as one of misplaced power: “The dominant culture is largely unable to change because inclusivity and hospitality occur based on that culture’s initiatives and terms” (Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin, 2014).

Ministry by children is an idea that should be taken seriously. In exploring the place of children in worship Beckwith (2010) invites her readers to agree “that the worship experiences of an entire faith community are an act of spiritual formation for its participants” and therefore we should want to include our children in this. The removal of children she argues, is because adults do not want to be disturbed by their presence. Beckwith points out that what adults desire is worship that is convenient, but adults and children learn that being a Christian is not always convenient. Beckwith goes on to argue that “children teach *us* about worship and help *us* to reframe our understanding of what is happening in our worship” [my italics] (2010, p.26). We can draw from this argument that to receive the ministry of children is to receive their care and their overacceptance of us.

The Church has a long history of nurturing the faith of children but if we accept that children bring their own ministry rather than just being recipients of ministry this means we also have a duty of care to ensure that children are able to exercise their ministry in worship. It means letting children care for us in worship. This also entails overaccepting, by letting go the status of adult knows best and becoming like a child. Taizé is a good example of witnessing children as ‘naturally liturgical beings’. From the journal of Brother Roger, founder of Taizé: “If they only knew how much their waiting for Christ supports our own! July 26, 1970” (Fidanzio, 2010, p.96). Co-curating worship is evident, not in activity but in being together at the centre of worship, the children modelling their way of being for all the youth and adults around them.

The Ethics of Children’s Ministry

The issue is one of virtue ethics and liberation where care and overacceptance are key characteristics. Wells (2004, p.28) argues for an "ethics for the excluded" where gender, race, class, sexual orientation give voice to examples from these demographic groups who are marginalised in their communities. The need is for "individual liberty to be extended more justly" (2004, p.29). Wells also points to an ethics for the excluded where, like the early church, the minority group's practices offer a rival model to that of mainstream society. The argument is that ethics for the excluded can be applied in both these forms when looking at children's ministry. Children may be seen as a marginalised or excluded group in secular and church

society. If churches practised an ethic of the excluded in liturgical prayer with children it would present a distinctive Christian ethical model to society as a whole. The issue is also political. Ward (2009) describes prayer in political terms as “that deep inhabitation of the world, its flesh and its spirit”. It is through prayer that we come to a deeper understanding of the world to help us “live as transistors for the transformation of the world through Christ” (pp.281-282). Ward’s concern with discipleship and formation leads him to the view that it is political because “it is implicated in a messianic reversal of established values and in a challenge to received authorities and principalities” (p.284). The practice of co-curation in liturgical prayer is not immune from this political dimension. It may well mean paying much more attention to the world but also challenging the received values of the world’s kingdoms (including those evident in the Church). A kingdom ethic includes a theology for worship and for action: “The spirituality of liberation is above all an insistence upon the indivisibility of doctrine, worship and action” (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005) to allow God’s kingdom to break through. Co-curation in liturgical prayer may be seen as being present together or indwelling, in order to bring something new into being as a sign of God’s kingdom. This creative process mirrors God’s creative process where personhood or the importance of each individual is of primary value; where the excluded are included; virtue ethics is practised; power shared in a process of indwelling.

From this discussion it can be seen that co-curating with children is a kingdom imperative to become like children as signs of the kingdom and a virtue ethic in including those excluded or on the margins of society. Practising these in liturgical prayer will lead to a model of Church as Child.

Part 3

Why Co-curate *Worship* - With Children?

In this section it will be argued that *worship* over and above other forms of ministry with children, is important to their own spiritual flourishing. Here two reasons are presented. They are that learning by being part of the worship practices of the church community is fundamental to spiritual formation; play is not just a characteristic of activity but characteristic of liturgical prayer.

Doing and Being

Spiritual formation it is argued is fundamental to discipleship. Beckwith (2010, p.26) states that spiritual formation happens for children "when they practise the rituals and rites that both pass on the values of Jesus and push them out of their comfort zones". It is reasonable to argue that children should be given opportunities to observe and mirror the worship of adults. My own spiritual formation and discipleship happened in this way. When I was a child I couldn't wait to join the church choir at the age of ten. I learnt through the rituals of worship and by being alongside others of all ages and right in the middle of worship. I shall never forget my first Maundy Thursday service when, as we sang a psalm, the altar was stripped and left in darkness. I felt the abandonment and desolation of Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

The learning by taking part, with no other demands except to be, is a challenge to those who would argue that children will be bored. The witness of the children in Taizé also represents a challenge to assumptions about what children need in worship. The liturgical prayer models a spiritual way of being, largely consisting of meditative music and silence in a relaxed but intense worship space. Such conditions, which may as Nye suggests "help children develop a natural appetite for prayer". Children, as a consequence, may become even more responsive to "non-verbal prayerfulness" (Nye, 2009, p.59).

In my benefice children's ministry happens on Sundays in this way. In two churches a family model of children's ministry is practised with the family gathered at the beginning of worship then the junior members are taken out to another room to return in time to come to the altar rail to receive a blessing or Holy Communion. At another, the Sunday School meets in the village hall and has no contact with the congregation at all. However there have been glimpses of co-curation. At one

service it was the baptism of Kyloe, aged three, who had already been introduced by his mum to the hymns at home that we would be singing in church. As soon as Kyloe heard the notes to begin the last hymn, the usually very shy little boy jumped off his Mum's lap and, completely absorbed by the music, began to dance at the front of the church. The congregation became equally absorbed by the dance. Afterwards a non Christian family member declared he had glimpsed God in Kyloe's dance.

At another service Amelia, aged 10, was receiving Holy Communion for the first time. I invited her to be welcomed by everyone and then together we shared the Peace with the congregation and went to the altar. We prepared the table together and I began the ritual of the Eucharistic Prayer, raising my hands as my usual practice. At my side I realised that Amelia was following my movements: my hands and her hands were moving in unison. After the service I was asked by a Sunday School leader (who happened to be present) where Amelia had come from and why I hadn't sent her to Sunday School? A peculiar question and a clear example of how a school model is still clung to by those responsible for children's ministry in that church.

What is practised in these churches is an adult-centred view of children's ministry. It is adults who will say that children need to be removed from 'adult' worship: to be occupied, kept busy, entertained and have something made to take home.

In children's ministry, active learning or learning by doing is still seen to be key to the development of young disciples despite research to the contrary (c/f Berryman 1979 and 2013, Nye 2009, Beckwith 2010, Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin, 2014). For example, a key value of Messy Church is: "…hands-on activities to explore Bible stories, to reflect a God of creativity and to give people a chance to play together" (Messy Church, 2014). On diocesan websites Messy Church features prominently as *the* children's ministry of the age (c/f Ely Diocese, 2014). The desire to see children actively involved is natural but the argument being developed here is that spiritual formation requires learning by being as much as doing.

Beckwith for example, argues strongly for a change to the flow of children's ministry that seems headed in a direction away from being church:

> The church is losing its unique calling - its ability to demonstrate unity and love within great diversity. When the church ceases to be the church in this way, it becomes nothing more than the local community center that just happens to tell people about Jesus (2010, p.137).

The argument that we should subvert the move towards networks of similar ages and interests in society compelling. Children need to mix with adults and those who are different from them. Beckwith sees the church's shared story, rituals and relationships becoming increasingly secondary to "the educational model's emphasis on knowledge over embedded understanding" in the spiritual formation of children. The problem is that traditional modes of children's formation and discipleship involve no risk. (2010, p.22). Beckwith makes an important truth about faith. Being a Christian is inconvenient and that children and adults need to learn this. Worship that is characterised by spiritual formation will be inconvenient. When parents are invited to put themselves out by having to make time for Sunday worship and when the congregation has to change its practices to make way for the presence of children at the centre of worship "we show [children] that being a person who loves God and lives in the way of Jesus often means doing things that are inconvenient for us (p. 92). Inconvenience must therefore be a characteristic of overaccepting.

A similar sentiment is expressed by Odem in more capitalist terms, as "overinvesting" meaning "giving yourself away". To over invest in young people "means including the young in all of the life-giving dimensions of the community. If worship is at the heart of the community, how can the church engage youth more deeply in corporate worship?" (2013). The children in the Taizé model of the Church as Child cannot be described as active learners. It is not learning by being told or learning by doing but learning by being present to worship moment by moment. That isn't to say that things may not be done together but this is not the goal. The goal is *being* together, *experiencing* together to bring something into being.

Learning by being or tacit knowing is described by Polanyi (1969, p.160) as "an act of *indwelling* by which we gain access to new meaning." In using the example of a scientific discovery, Polanyi states that tacit knowing is arrived at when we cease to focus upon individual or separate elements of an entity, for example, moving from the "visual perception of objects" to their "theoretical coherence", so that knowledge is revealed through an integration of experience of individual components *together* with experience of the whole (p.140). Things may be known separately in one way but when seen together give new and different experiences. The process requires *being with* rather than doing. This is described as "indwelling" where Polanyi states, "since all understanding is tacit knowing, all understanding is achieved by indwelling" (p.40). This work on tacit learning may be applied to the learning happening through co-curation In liturgical prayer, which may be described as a process of indwelling.

Liturgical Play

Co-curation, it is argued is a creative process of indwelling which unfolds, like a drama. This process is relational and dynamic and may be described as liturgical play.

An example of the importance given to allowing children to play and imagine liturgically can be seen in the ancient cathedral in Linköping, Sweden. In the body of the church there is a purpose built cupboard which opens out to reveal all the liturgical objects for playing church. The cathedral openly expresses its view that children learn best though play and that play is life-giving. The children are invited to play church in the heart of the sacred space. Ziegenhals (2014) observes that the cathedral "does not wait until the children are ready to participate in, say, a youth program, to think about leadership. Nor does it wall off the role of bishop or priest and the ornate vestments and trappings as too sacred for children's role play". The cupboard is also seen to witness to the importance placed on the care and nurturing of the spirituality of children which has led the worshipping community to let the children be themselves, to play in this holy place. They have overaccepted in letting go of any aesthetic sensibilities held for an ancient building. It is a complete reassessment of what is precious to the congregation.

A step towards co-curating with children in liturgical prayer may be seen in the theology of the children's ministry programme: *Godly Play*. A session can be likened to liturgical prayer where the liturgical language of sacred words, symbols and codes is learnt through repetition. When sitting in on a *Godly Play* session led by a new practitioner, she momentarily forgot how to describe the candle on the focus table, till a four-year-old prompted "it's the Christ Candle." Another pre schooler also pointed out that the bag containing a puppet the leader had brought with her was purple to match the liturgical colour of the season. The content of a *Godly Play* session may be similar to Sunday worship with bible stories, liturgical action and prayer. However, the process involves "contemplative silence" where time is given to wonder and question. The creative process involved in *Godly Play* is called the centre point or middle realm. The role of a mentor is in first finding the still point in themselves in order to help children to find the still point for themselves (Berryman, 2013, p.77). Objects are very important too. They become invested with sacred meaning as transitional objects "which have all the characteristics of transitional space such as being playful, beautiful, religious and stimulating to our creativity" (p.91). This still point or middle realm is respected by the children because they have learned the language of the objects in the room. What happens in *Godly Play* has all the qualities of co-curation in shared meaning making, power sharing,

care, prayer and overaccepting. There is much to learn from this in the wider application of co-curating worship with children in an intergenerational congregation.

This section concludes that an outcome of co-curation may be that it enables liturgical play to happen. When the whole worshipping community begins to play in this way we may be on the way to becoming like children as signs of God's kingdom.

Conclusion and Further Work

Worship as liturgical prayer, care and overacceptance is the recipe I have suggested for co-curation. Key to the process of co-curation is being or indwelling. An outcome of co-curation may be that all present in worship become involved in liturgical play. Practising co-curation in this way may realise a kingdom imperative of the Church as Child. It will however require a radical transformation in parish churches, where the ministry of care by adults of the youngest members of its community is still seen as leading and providing activities to entertain children outside of the adult worshipping community. But in overaccepting children in worship by practising co-curating we can transform the formation and discipleship of the whole community.

I have my own views based upon literature, reflexive observation of children in worship, my practice as a priest, my own experience as a child and my formation as witness to the presence of children in the church in Taizé. My next step will be to conduct research among children and adults within and outside a local worshipping community to examine the question of why co-curate worship with children?

The intention of my research will be to discover whether a new ethical response to the issues of children in worship can indeed as I have argued, transform worshipping communities. Theological Action Research is a method that has the capacity within it to transform communities. Helen Cameron (2010) describes her book: *Talking about God in Practice* as exploring the outward facing work of the church. The issue of children in church is not inward facing but necessary outward facing work in generating a dialogue about the practice of working with children.

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Appendix 3. Paper 3: An examination of the issues, questions and methods relevant to an investigation of co-curating the Eucharist with children.

An examination of the issues, questions and methods relevant to an investigation of co-curating the Eucharist with children.

Part 1

The Journey to a Concept Framework

Potential contribution to knowledge and practice

This paper seeks to show my development as an advanced researcher in practical theology rooted in my work as an ordained priest in the Church of England. I have found reflexivity and critical awareness in ministry has helped identify and sharp the focus of my enquiry. The research intends to explore where professional knowledge is either lacking or contested by investigating what co-curating with children may look and feel like for all those taking part in eucharistic liturgical worship.

Liturgical worship is defined here as worship shared together through a "subtle blend of word, song, movement, gesture and silence" (Perham, 2010, p.28). Eucharistic worship involves the sharing of Holy Communion at its heart and may be regarded as "the ultimate place of liturgical formation and transformation" (2010, p.32). Preparing or curating this kind of worship involves mixing and blending liturgical actions with the purpose of creating "a setting where people with their infinite variety of personality and preference can experience something overwhelmingly wonderful that binds and draws together" (p.28). This creative process may be likened to the curating of works of art, stories and museum collections.

Co-curation in the field of museum curation is seen as increasingly important to learning and engagement: "Co-curation and similar techniques gathered together under the umbrella of 'participation' describe a range of practices in which lay people work to develop displays and programs within

museums" (Boon, 2011, p.1). Involving the general public right from inception through to final display, rather than the traditional invitation to view at the end of the curation process, is seen to deepen the experience of engagement with the artefact/s.

Traditionally worship has been curated by the minister for the whole congregation but increasingly there is much more lay involvement in preparing and leading worship. Co-curation is the key term chosen for this research proposal. Traditionally in the churches of my tradition those helping to make the worship happen have been adults. This investigation focuses upon the impact of co-curating the Eucharist with children. The theological imperative for the research is firmly rooted in Jesus's teaching:

> Let the little children come to me; do not stop them. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.
> (Mark 10.14-15, NRSV).

The enquiry seeks to address the theological question of what it means for children to be at the centre of eucharistic worship as an expression of the Kingdom of God: where "at this table all are equal and the hungry are fed" (Perham, 2010, p.38).

Influence of stage 1 work

My first paper drew upon journal notes made while using Godly Play with children. These informed a research of literature from the fields of theology, Christian spirituality, education and sociology. The discussion focussed upon the development of co-curation in the fields of museum and art curation and its application to the co-curation of worship with children. Concepts of pilgrimage and play were explored to suggest that these are key Christian concepts churches could focus upon in its response to the question of whether the normative model of adults preparing worship and related activities **for** children is best for the flourishing of worshipping communities.

The question of why and how co-curating worship with children might be important to the Church was developed in Paper 2. Theological reflections of my experience in parish ministry with children again informed this enquiry, together with the Common Prayer of Taizé where children are invited to be with the prior of the community at the centre of the worship. A hermeneutical

approach was adopted to investigate a range of literatures concerned with children's ministry and spirituality (Appendix A). Supporting literature was explored from the fields of museum curation, education and liturgical worship (Appendix B). A wider review then examined biblical commentary, theology as a creative process, worship as pastoral care and the relationship of liturgical worship to the concepts of tacit learning and play. Within a working definition of worship as liturgical prayer, the argument was presented that the key concepts of liturgical prayer, cure or care and over-accepting may be seen as important to the practice of co-curation. The review suggested that co-curating worship with children may be important to the spiritual flourishing of the whole worshipping community as well as to the spiritual formation of children. The theological outworking of co-curation may be seen as liturgical play and a means for all to become like children in worship as a sign of the Kingdom of God.

A difficulty at Stage 1 has been keeping a critical distance from my feelings for a subject located in deeply held beliefs. There has been a tendency to focus on 'friendly' literature with insufficient criticism of my role as parish priest in the research process. However, this has taught me the importance of a personal reflexivity, where I acknowledge that I am a part of the research I am undertaking (Swinton and Mowat pp. 59-61).

Research question and key concepts

According to Andrews (2003, p.17) a disadvantage of not having a clearly formulated research question at the start of an investigation is that the literature review may lack purpose and be "hard to contain" (2003, p.17). I would agree with this. To begin with I wasn't at all certain where the literature and reflexive practice were taking me. I was drawn to explore many different lines of enquiry but these led me to the formulation of an overarching and ambitious question: is co-curating the Eucharist with children important to the spiritual flourishing of the Church? From this I began to map key concepts and themes (fig. 1).

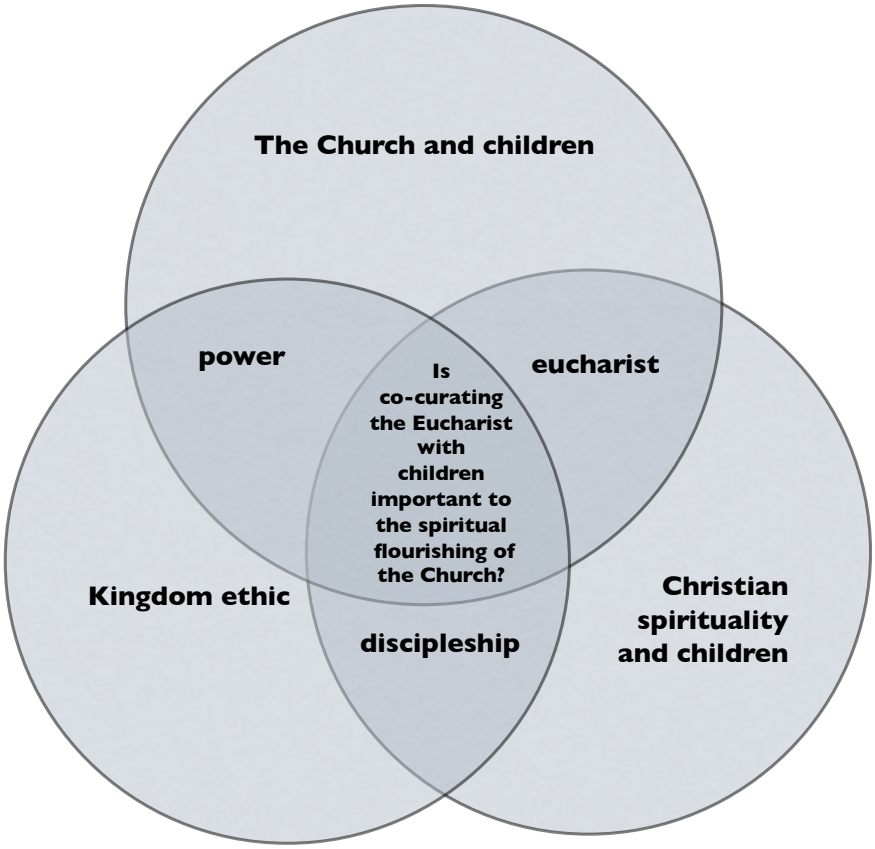

Fig.1

My question has emerged from practice **and** literature in a reflexive relationship. Andrews does see there are advantages too in this approach. The enquiry is firmly rooted in the literature and will provide the coherence between this and the thesis (2003, p.17). My literature review will develop as I reflect upon the research data collected in dialogue with Christian tradition and practice as part of the action-reflection cycle (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.26).

Three key themes arising from my literature research and practice are central to the question: Church and Children; a Kingdom Ethic and Christian Spirituality and Children. It is in their relationships that key concepts also began to emerge concerned with Christian ethics about power, eucharist and discipleship (fig.1.).

The framework illustrated provides a means of looking in two contrasting ways at the concepts. The first may be regarded as the dominant or normative model for the Church's response to the spiritual formation of children. The focus is on Jesus's instruction to "let the little children come to me; do not stop them", but may be less concerned with Jesus' teaching:

"unless you become like this child you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven" (Mark 10.14-15, NRSV). The second way takes both parts of the teaching seriously and may be seen as a counter-cultural model.

The normative model

This model is illustrated in three generalisations:

First, that power is seen to reside with adults who prepare the worship for the rest. The power exercised is one of adults knowing best what children need, particularly when it comes to being in church: children must be occupied so they won't be bored, disruptive or disturb the worship of others; services are planned for children and families (and there are many published materials to help with this) with the criteria that it be short, simple, the children given something to do and the congregation entertained.

Second, and related to the first, is that the Eucharist is not seen as a suitable service for children to be present. A liturgically-rich eucharistic service is usually described as a 'traditional' or 'formal' service. A study of church notice boards quickly reveals this language of contrast where the welcome offered to different ages of people is on the basis of a perceived attraction. The message promoted is that the eucharist is a formal and traditional service that will not attract young people and families. This is the main reason why churches introduce Services of the Word or 'family services' on some Sundays of the month.

Third, discipleship is directly related to power and the Eucharist. In the normative model the formation of disciples is seen to be an adult activity, either adults teaching other adults or teaching children. Adults decide when children are ready to receive teaching about the Eucharist. The Eucharist must be 'understood' before it can be received.

The counter-cultural model

The second way to look at the three concepts is to see power as becoming like children. In Paper 2 I cited the Church of England's *Going for Growth* report which concluded that churches were lacking in humility by not accepting children as they are (Church of England Archbishop's Council Education Division 2010, p.2). Jesus's call for his disciples to become like children is a call to humility. If taken seriously then the dominant culture where power is held must change to welcome ministry by children (Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin, 2014). There is an ironic role reversal here where to

become like children is to become silent like the least of all: “A silent child is placed among the noisy disciples for ontological appreciation: it is the silent child who teaches” (Berryman, 2002, p.130).

For Christians one sign of the kingdom is the Eucharist. In the Godly Play story presentation: *The Good Shepherd and World Communion* (Berryman, 2003, pp.91-98) people of all ages and cultures are brought to gather around the table of the Good Shepherd and to share in the bread and in the wine. The story concludes with the words: “and even the children come”. This loaded phrase suggests the reality that in many churches the children are not welcome at this sacred moment. Yet many researchers and writers on the subject argue that eucharistic worship is where, above all, ministry by children should be taken seriously as an act of spiritual formation. For example, Beckwith states: “where children can help the whole worshipping community to see and learn with fresh eyes” (2010, p.26). We can draw from this argument that to receive the ministry of children is to receive their care of us.

Jesus’s teaching, particularly through the parables, is concerned with the kingdom he is bringing in. This kingdom is not a place but a way of being (Strange, 1996, p.46). A kingdom way of being subverts societal hierarchies where status and power are aligned with material wealth, privilege and position. This is familiar territory in society today, just as it was 2,000 years ago. The society of the parish church is no exception. But as a sign of the kingdom it has the potential to subvert hierarchies, deepen spiritual engagement and counter the dominant model.

Part 2

The Research Proposal

Context for the research

My workplace consists of two urban parishes in Derby with populations each of approximately 7,500. I have been in post since April 2015. The church traditions are sacramental with St Osmund's described as anglo catholic and St Edmund's as 'liberal catholic'. The 'Spotlight'[8] for each parish shows the biggest age-group to be between 18 and 29 years. This compares with over 60 years for each congregation. The main Sunday service of each church is Holy Communion. The Eucharist is central to the tradition of each church.

A Sunday School/Junior Church meets at St Osmund's on the first Sunday of the month at the same time as the service and the children are present for part of the time, including the distribution of Holy Communion. The numbers of children attending may be four or fewer. There is a thriving Messy Church that meets bi-monthly but these families do not attend o nSundays.

At St Edmund's 'Explorers' meet each Sunday at the same time as the service and are present at the beginning and at the end. There is an average of five attenders all from one extended family and brought by the grandparents. A change was made to the usual pattern of services during the vacancy with the introduction of a 'family style' Service of the Word in the hope of attracting families. The result was a diluted liturgy focused on entertainment that did not result in improved attendance and left regular worshippers dissatisfied. Though this change did not work the consequence has been to further reinforce anxieties about eucharistic worship as a vehicle for discipleship. On the first Sunday of the month the children have recently been present throughout the service and the liturgy has been adapted to an All Age Eucharist.

In either church there has been little or no work done on curating Eucharistic worship to include children, but there is a desire for change. The Bishop and Church Councils are supportive of the research proposal and keen to see its results inform practice at St Osmund's and St Edmund's and their experiences shared in the diocese and wider Church.

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[8]Quantitative data produced by the Church of England for each parish in the country, which compares and analyses data from churches based upon their annual mission statistics return with government data derived from census figures.

Indicative title

The research proposal takes the research question at the centre of the concept framework as an indicative title for this study: Would co-curating the Eucharist with children be important to the future worshipping life of the two parishes where I work? Importance is a useful concept and may be evidenced in a variety of ways.

First, it begs the question: important for whom? For most in the local communities around my churches the question of co-curating the eucharist with children is unimportant and irrelevant. Yet the action of doing it may acquire relevance. For example at occasions such as Remembrance Sunday and where couples come to hear their Banns read or a parent to have their baby Christened. Co-curating worship with children may be important in establishing what the church where they have fleetingly touched base is for and who it is for. Vicarious religion acknowledges the implicit relationship between the worshipping community of a parish church and the wider community it serves: “who retain some sort of belief, and who wish from time to time to make contact with the institutions with which they identify” (Davie, 2015, p.81). It is important to this research therefore that voices from the wider community are heard.

The second voice is that of the church members. Members of congregations have a vested interest. Those who regularly come to church want worship to work for them. Research among emergent churches has shown that “liturgy inspired and created locally was holy and beautiful precisely because it was local and authentic to those who offered it” (Gray-Reeves and Perham, 2011, p.38). Changes to the usual way of doing things can inflame passions and impede or enable change in equal measure. These voices need to be heard. In my two churches most of the regular congregants are older adults. The third voice, that of children, is the least heard but for the purposes of this study it is most important that space is created to listen to them:

> Children tend to be obvious, and when adults take more than a moment to pay attention to their messages….they open themselves to some of the obvious ways God is working in their midst (Clifton-Soderstrom and Bjorlin, 2014, p.12).

As well as for whom it is also important to ask important for what? I have used the phrase 'worshipping life', a common term in church parlance but what does it mean? A worshipping community may be defined as a public coming together "to create the sense that God is with us (plural) and that we respond by dwelling in this new world" (Dawn, 1995, p.140). The worshipping life of the community is characterised therefore by how it dwells or lives the sense that God is present. The importance of the whom and the what may be seen in Godly Play. For example, what children may choose to do in a Godly Play context is described and seen as 'work': "deeply playful 'work' expands on their [*the children's*] response, both to the lesson and to the other events in their lives". (Berryman, 2002, p.56).

Research objectives and draft research question

The aims of the research are:

1. To collect data where none has existed in these parishes; to discover the impact of worship where it is not co-curated with children and where it is.

2. For St Osmund's and St Edmund's to use the results to make decisions about future styles of worship.

3. For these findings to be disseminated in Derby diocese and the wider Church to help other worshipping communities consider children in the worshipping life of their Church.

A prelude to the research enquiry has been a Transforming Worship course derived from resources of the Church of England Liturgical Commission, which aims "to resource and promote liturgical worship and involve the whole church in liturgical growth" (The Church of England, 2016). Attended by members of both churches this was an important starting point in exploring why we do what we do at the moment. Key concepts of belonging, becoming and believing through worship were explored (Moger and Bradshaw 2008, p.3). A sense of belonging may be discerned in feelings of being part of a family. A sense of becoming may be discerned in an awareness of being part of something bigger or a sense of the numinous or 'other than myself'. A sense of believing may be discerned in expressions of commitment that may be life-changing. The worship course established that a journey of belonging, becoming and believing was important and useful in describing the participants' own journeys in faith.

The intended research seeks to discover whether co-curating the Eucharist with children is important to the belonging, becoming, believing of a worshipping community. I hope that academic research about children in church will contribute to the gap in knowledge I have discovered through my practice and through the literature review. Both churches have been through a long unsettled period where they have seen their congregations age and decline but have felt powerless to respond.

Indicative research methods

In searching for appropriate qualitative research methodologies I need to address key features of this enquiry to establish the method or methods that will best answer my question.

This work is a process of heuristic enquiry where why and how children may be active participants in the worshipping life of a church community is a question if not a problem. This proposed research may raise questions about how and why worship is important. Etherington suggests that it is a requisite of heuristic enquiry that the researcher be personally connected with the proposed research. It is a process of enquiry that leads to discovery for all those involved including the researcher (2004, pp.110-111). Important to this process will continue to be my research journal where, in exploring without inhibitions the relationships between me and my co-researchers and the data we collect, I hope to create a "coherent narrative" (2004, p.127). Exploring together whether co-curating the Eucharist with children is important will also help my churches gain confidence in tackling difficult issues in bringing to light our preconceptions and assumptions. This sets my research within the field of phenomenological enquiry where the need to understand the biases of my co-researchers myself and the wider church membership is integral to the enquiry (Robson, 2011, p.151).

The importance of worship to people can be measured to a degree by using questionnaires to gather quantitative data. However, this is a social research study seeking to discover the personal experiences of those taking part and best realised through qualitative means. A qualitative typology includes: verbal data collecting from which theories and ideas are allowed to emerge and evolve; the importance of context and personal perspectives, and the emergence and flexibility of research design. Qualitative research take place in natural settings focussing upon different social groups through

the gathering of feelings and experiences, in this case, about worship they have attended. To collect data where none has existed means going beyond the regular worshipping congregation to include the voices of the wider community and children. This is the social world created by those involved (Robson, 2011, p.19). The proposed research therefore is best suited to a phenomenological approach, where the research needs to be complex to maintain its trustworthiness in reflecting a world also seen as “complex and interconnected” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, pp.16-17).

The first feature of this phenomenology is a constructivist paradigm where I am not a distant observer but involved both as a facilitator of co-researching groups and as parish priest. This approach accepts the epistemology that meaning derived from the data will be negotiated as “an active process of construction and interpretation” (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.36). A second feature is that the data needs to describe rather than explain experiences because it is derived from personal experience. The data will be a representation of the reality of the experience of worship through the eyes of participants. I am also part of that experience but have preconceived understandings, which “demands a radical openness to the experience of the other and a respect for experiences that transcend one’s own horizons (2006, p.114). Thirdly, a methodology is needed that relies upon working hypotheses or interpretative processes not the derivation of empirical data to prove or disprove a theory.

Qualitative social research acknowledges that the researchers’ “personal commitment and reflexivity” is valued as is their “openness and receptivity” (Robson, 2011, p.19). This begins at the conception of the research questions. Andrews (2003, pp.1-2) highlights the importance of putting yourself in the shoes of the person being asked the question. My values are derived from my own practice in ministry with children. The experience of Godly Play practice has shown me the potential of some of its features to the construction of qualitative social research.

Firstly, the generating of insights is in response to a common or shared experience. We can describe the shared experience as a shared story or a story shared: watching and listening as a story unfolds and sharing and learning from that experience. In Godly Play the participants become immersed in the story presentation. Berryman describes story as “a unique way of knowing” (2002, p.21). Secondly, in Godly Play an approach akin to a traditional monastic (lectio divina) model of reading scripture is adopted

through a story presentation where the participants are invited “to seek an intuitive understanding, to grow in wisdom, to savor the aesthetic value of the words and, ultimately to encounter God” (2002, pp.21-22). This may be likened to the experience of worship with others where for each person the experience will be different but all are invited through liturgical word and action to come to a deeper understanding of their shared story as people of God. Thirdly, is the forming of the circle where all experiences and contributions are equally valued. In this research proposal the application is a circle of researchers sharing their experiences of the worship they have attended by telling and exploring its story. In Godly Play the leader facilitates the building of the circle and a welcoming atmosphere for story-telling and sharing. My research role will be similarly constructed to facilitate the gathering of verbal data through the putting of thematic starter questions.

The indicative qualitative method suggested by the features of the constructivist paradigm presented is participatory research: “at heart this method of qualitative research assumes the best people to research a given topic are those who have the most experience of it” (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.227); in the case of this enquiry my self and my church members. However, this method needs further refining or qualifying. One group of co-researchers will be from the worshipping community but there are two further dimensions important to this research. First, for my churches to engage with the experiences of those who don’t usually come to church and those of children who may or may not be church attenders. The voices of adults from the community who may have little or no experience of what usually happens at their local church on Sundays will enable the congregation to see with fresh eyes. Second, that all adults hear the voices of children and see worship through their eyes. In this case it is the fresh experience rather than the most experience which will provide new insights.

There is a further dimension to enrich this study. The method will be comparative. None of the co-researchers, including those from the present congregations, will have experienced worship co-curated with children. Giving all co-researchers an opportunity to reflect upon normative worship, and then to reflect upon worship when it is co-curated with children where it is new to everyone, will provide a before and after dimension to data analysis that will enable the congregations to reflect upon the whole process and make decisions on planning services in the future. Swinton and Mowat describe this as “a thick description” which “seeks to capture the essence of

a phenomenon in a way that communicates it in all its fullness" (2006, p. 123). However this ethnographic approach suggests a longitudinal study where "a 'thick description' of practice" is the result of "an extended period of observation and participation in a community of practice" (Cameron and Duce, 2013, p.xxix). An ethnographic study though is inappropriate for two reasons. Such an extended period of time needed will be difficult to sustain where adults outside the church and children are central to the success of the research. The study needs to be time-bound to ensure participation. Also, an ethnography suggests my role is as observer and that my observations will be part of the research data. The problem with this approach is that it will not effect change. Real change will only come from within the worshipping community. The purpose of working with others as co-researchers is that the process is transformational.

Cameron et al see the key work of theological research as four-voiced theology: operant; espoused; normative, and formal. Each of these voices represent different positions: what people of faith do; what they say they do; what the Christian tradition says (which will be different for different faith communities as well as for individuals), and what academic theologians have to say. The task of the practical theologian is to bring these four voices together "into a conscious conversation so that all voices can be enriched" (2013, pp.xxx-xxxi). This has much potential as a method for my study, but the approach needs to be staged. The time to engage all four voices is at a later stage in the process of data analysis. In the research-gathering process and the first stage of analysis the most important voices are those of my co-researchers. Some of these may represent the operant, the espoused and the normative. I may represent the academic but the initial analysis will not be my work. What is lacking though in a 'four-voiced theology' is the fifth dimension: the voice of the powerless: in this enquiry the voices of children and those on the outside of the faith community. I believe that enabling the church members to hear the worship experiences of those who don't usually attend our churches, and particularly those of children, to be an essential element of this research.

My method then needs to be participatory, comparative and five-voiced. Participatory research is central to the Action Research method.

I first used Action Research (AR) when investigating the management of education change. This qualitative research method has its birth in the field

of education. In 1975 Laurence Stenhouse developed the concept of "teacher as researcher", still the rationale for all action research today (Townsend, 2013, p.4). This radically new method of research focussed on the practitioner, not only reflecting upon their own practice, but "teachers' testing its tentative hypotheses through research in their own situations" to effect change and improve the practices of the institution (Stenhouse, 1975, p.141). Practical theology has inherited the Stenhouse legacy that practice informs research that informs practice. The AR approach is rooted in ideals that are democratic, equitable, liberating and life-enhancing (2013, p.30). It is easy to see how a form of action research is ideally suited to research within both big and small organisations.

Since Stenhouse the Action Research method has developed into different models. One is Systematic Action Research. Here the research focus is linked by a common approach and inquiry by different groups or individuals "engaging with a process of generating insights through some means of collecting and interpreting evidence" (Townsend, 2013, p. 27). The collected data leads to a deeper or broader understanding and the possibility of action or change. This approach links its two distinctive features: embedded in systems and distributive inquiry" (2013, p.27). This approach is observational in the sense that it involves watching and listening (Robson, 2011, p.316). Participatory Action Research (PAR) involves shared watching and listening. A difficulty with observational methods of research is the perceived need for an immersive approach that takes time (2011, p.317). This may work well in a context where the group is established, for example a class of children and their teacher, but the context for this research is different. The research team will involve those from the "tribe" or congregation (2010, p.317) and others from outside. The team can only be brought together therefore for a limited time.

Like Godly Play, PAR begins with the invitation to become involved: for this enquiry, the way the worship is unfolded or enacted at each church and to share that experience in order to tell its story. The time factor is important here. Both an act of worship and a Godly Play story presentation are not concerned with the passing of time: "*chronos* time" but "*kairos* time": the significance of time given to see God (Berryman, 2002, p.19). For the purposes of this research therefore it is the significant experience of participating in one act of worship that is important rather than a measure of experience of many services over time.

Secondly, the generation of insights happens through time spent in considering what has been experienced "as understood by the various participants" (Robson, 2011, p.190). In Godly Play this is the *wondering* stage: "there are no predetermined answers to a wondering question" (Berryman, 2002, p.56). As in PAR answers emerge from the process and all are valid. *Wondering* questions therefore provide a useful starting point in developing a group discussion about the importance of worship from different perspectives just as in a Godly Play session.
For example:

'I wonder which part of the service was the most important for you?'

'I wonder how being in the service made you feel?'

'I wonder how much of you was really involved?'

'I wonder where you came closer to God and God came closer to you in the service?'

Godly Play-style questions have been tried and tested for many years with children and adults: "accepting all contributions as equally valuable early attempts to verbalise often ineffable insights" (Nye, 2015). The types of Godly Play question illustrated are particularly associated with presentations focussed upon liturgical action that "invite us to integrate our life with the worship of the Christian people" (2002, p.56). In the proposed Participatory Action Research the data gathered will provide insights into the experience of what story the worship is telling from the perspective of the newcomer, the regular and the child.

However, there is also my own perspective and voice to consider as a reflexive researcher. New knowledge can be revealed through an approach where I acknowledge I am part of the setting: "an approach that favours the experiential as evidence, the affective and imaginative as thought processes, and story as an important form of expression" (Dixon, 2012, p.59). I see that a *wondering* process allows for "a conversation between equals" to develop where the interviewer adopts a key listening role to enable the story to emerge (Etherington, 2004, p.39).

Through reflexive journalling I will be able to reflect upon not just my own position as both insider and outsider (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.166) but my spiritual journey in eucharistic worship from a child to an adult with children. The argument is also made that for the practical theologian the flexible use of more than one qualitative research method to best meet the

needs of particular contexts and experiences is an important aspect of validating the research (2006, pp.50-51).

Work plan and methodologies

Purposive sampling

Robson describes sampling in relation to "population" (2011, p.279). In this enquiry there are three populations: firstly: a church congregation. The sample can at the same time refer to 'of this congregation' but may be applicable to all congregations. In the same way as a congregation may be defined as belonging to this church or belonging to any church. The second population: the local community may be similarly defined as living in the vicinity of this church or any church. The third population of children may be defined as of this church and/or local community or any church and/or local community. In each case what gives definition is the context of the church and area from which the sample is drawn.

Sampling is divided into probability or random methods where "it is possible to specify the probability that any person…will be included in the sample" and non probability methods where this is not possible (2011, p. 274). A probability method is unsuitable for this enquiry as it will be very difficult for example, to specify that a particular age, gender or character comprise each population other than the age range of the children's group and even here a degree of flexibility will be needed as I am reliant upon the recruiting of willing volunteers. Non-probability sampling however can still be pro-active in approach. The principle of purposive sampling relies upon the judgement of the researcher to build a sample that will enable she/he to satisfy the specific needs of the enquiry (2011, p.275). Purposive sampling is the method best suited to this project where the purpose is to hear the voices of a sample of the regular congregation and the voices of those outside the congregation but important to it, especially children. It is also important to the emergent process of data collection and analysis:

> As our focus of enquiry guides us in our initial sample selection, the early and ongoing analysis of the data will suggest what is important to explore further (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.61).

Co-researchers

The PAR will firstly focus on groups of co-researchers at St Osmund's Church to suit their worshipping context. In the light of that experience and in dialogue with St Edmund's Church PAR will follow there but adapted to their context. By conducting research in two churches, with their own worship traditions and community contexts, I will derive a range and depth of data to provide a potentially richer analysis. Running the research sequentially rather than concurrently also means that lessons learnt from the first phase inform the second phase.

There will be three groups of co-researchers for the first phase at St Osmund's:
Group A: any children between the ages of approximately 6-10 years.
Group B: adults who do not usually go to church or to this church.
Group C: adults who are regular attenders at St Osmund's.
Each group will have the same focus and respond to the same Godly Play style questions.

The first phase will extend over a three month period and consist of three parts:

Part 1 consists of the co-researchers attending at least two church services as they are curated at the moment, followed by a group meeting lasting about an hour. At the meeting I will put four starter questions to facilitate discussion of their experiences of the worship they attended. I will use supplementary questions as they arise from the discussion. Another person will be present as data collector to write down what is said and to make an audio recording of the session.

Part 2 follows the same pattern as Part 1 with just one change: the services the participants attend will be co-curated by members of the child researcher group. For consistency the same questions are put to participants as for Part 1. At the start of each session the co-researchers will be given visual reminders of the content of the services they attended.

In Part 3 the groups will be given a transcript of the sessions to compare the personal experiences of the worship experienced in Part 1 with Part 2 and to compile a report to feed back to the other two teams of co-researchers. For the children's group I will read the transcript with them,

check for understanding and help them make any changes. These findings will initiate a discussion with the Parochial Church Council, Discipleship Team and the wider congregation.

Trialling and monitoring

The style of questions has been trialled with church members as part of the Transforming Worship course. I have also used the same Godly Play style of questions with children from inside and outside the worshipping communities. As I hoped, they have provided interesting and useful responses. However, I have taken care not to mirror the questions or process of data gathering that will occur in the field work because of the issue of internal validity. The responses of any participants may change in the light of having already experienced the questions and data gathering process (Robson, 2011, p.88). I am also mindful that in choosing to put to participants the same themed questions twice in the process of the research their responses may change because of the previous experience.

This raises the question of reliability and triangulation. Here the second method of reflexive journalling is important. Keeping a research journal and accurate records from the outset to gain an intimate knowledge of the data, will reveal insights or reflexive knowledge (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.70; p.215). Triangulation is achieved by firstly involving three teams of co-researchers from very different demographic positions in relation to the research question. Secondly, that each will bring their own preconceived understandings of Church and worship and relate these to the experience of worship during the research. Thirdly, by employing reflexive journalling as well as action research the process will have “more rigour, breadth and complexity” (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.215).

The relevant Participant Information Sheets have been trialled with children, parents, and members of church and with those who do not go to church. The feed back resulted in the use of simpler and more straightforward language for all groups (appendix D).

A key feature of this proposal is that the research is in two phases. The first phase will help to inform the construction of the PAR method for the second phase.

An advisory research team will be formed to monitor the research. Swinton and Mowat's example of participatory research includes people from

the subject group (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.234). The difference between that example and my research proposal is that the children and adults are not the subjects of the research, they are co-researchers. For this research it is important that an advisory team who oversee the integrity of the research.

Ethical considerations

I cannot impose change upon my worshipping communities but I am also someone in a position of power. To "gather knowledge of the other" raises ethical questions of ownership (Swinton and Mowat, p.2006, p.34). This is why it is important that I do not contribute any data to a PAR method. In this research proposal there are two outsider teams: children, and members of the local community who for one reason or another choose not to go to church are truly outsiders who bring little perceived expertise with them. Of particular concern to this research is the value of the child co-researchers. Children may be regarded by adults as having little experience to bring whether or not they already attend church. This is the dominant model illustrated in the discussion relating to fig 1. However, this research seeks to give children an equal voice with adults and to allow their voice to be heard. This means enabling children "to engage in research in positive and productive ways" and as co-researcher and facilitator to ensure that all of the adult co-researchers involved meet the children "on their own terms" (Bucknall, 2014, p.82).

Having established that involving children in this research is necessary my first consideration is whether children might be inconvenienced or harmed by this project (Alderson (2014, p.93). A second is whether the proposed research will respect the rights of the child participant (2014, p.88). An application to the Faculty Research Ethics Panel (FREP) at Anglia Ruskin University under the terms of their Research Ethics Policy (dated 23/6/14, Version 1) is a requirement. These considerations relating particularly to children within the wider ethical framework for this research were submitted and approved. The application covered selection and recruitment; design and content of Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms; identification of risk, and data security (appendix E).

Data collection methods and analysis

This is a two-stage approach reflecting the two research methods. First, the data from the Participatory Action Research will be collected and summarised. I will gather the responses of participants by using an independent person (Data Collector) in each session to make written notes and to make an audio recording. This way I can check the accuracy of what has been noted.

Following each session the data collector will transcribe the data using the notes and check them with the audio recording. I will make a further check and write a summary of the transcript. At the fourth session each group will receive a copy of the transcripts and the summary. These will be checked with the participants for accuracy and used for reflection to determine the feedback they wish to give to the other two groups. A further transcript and summary will be made of the data collected at the feedback session. The summary will be circulated to members of the congregation prior to a discussion of what can be learnt from the experiences of those who took part.

The second stage will be to analyse the raw data. The choice of PAR as a qualitative method where data is collected relating to a shared focus of enquiry, points to an inductive method of analysis where, “what becomes important to analyse emerges from the data itself” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.127). This approach involves deeply familiarising myself with the data, generating initial codes, identifying themes, constructing thematic networks and making comparisons between different aspects of the material. This gives flexibility when working within a participatory research paradigm and where the results of the analysis can be easily communicated to my congregations and diocese (Robson, 2011, p.477).

Using themed Godly Play-style questions suggests a thematic coded starting point to the data analysis. It will be within the style of a three-staged grounded theory or constant comparison approach that leaves the enquiry open to the discovery of a central core category (2011, p.489). However, thorough preparation of the data prior to analysis is vital to making sense of a mass of verbal data. The production of clear and accurate transcripts that are divided into units of meaning and coded is key to any inductive approach to data analysis (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, pp.127-131). Grounded theory involves three kinds of coding: *open* to find the categories; *axial* to find the

connections between them and *selective* to find the core category or categories (Robson, 2011, p.489)

After this process is concluded I will bring my own voice into play through the records in my journal to provide a richer layer of analysis and converting and grafting my research journey "into the service of theological action" (Swinton and Mowat, p.259). Reflexivity enables me to find and recognise my points of entry into the coded material (Etherington, 2004, p. 227).

Conclusion

The examination issues, questions and methods presented are the starting point for an investigation that I believe will help my two churches grow in understanding of the ways intergenerational co-curated worship may be important to the flourishing of our worshipping communities. It is hoped that this new knowledge will contribute to the wider Church's knowledge and understanding of the importance of a curatorial role for children in worship. In choosing Participatory Action Research as the vehicle for gathering data I hope that all those who take part will gain something from the experience: that it will provide "an opportunity for growth and learning for both researcher [*and her co-researchers*] as well as for the wider community" (2004, p.78).

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Appendix 4. Verbatim journal extracts: Journal 1

Journalling 4

Nov ‘14
From my own experience in parish ministry in Ely diocese, ministry with children is increasingly seen to lie outside of Sunday worship. It has always been the case throughout the whole history of the Sunday School movement since the C19 that children need their own time to learn about being a Christian. What has changed though is that the Messy Church movement is seen by my diocese (and from looking at diocesan websites across the country in the Church of England many others), as a key to breathe new life into the church to counter the decline in Sunday worship attendance. There is nothing wrong with this motive, however, what is happening is the promotion of a view that formal Sunday worship is unfit for the purpose of welcoming children and families. I cannot disagree with this.

Jan ‘15
The annual Mission Statistics form that is completed by every parish in England asks for a breakdown of attendance of children and adults at Christmas, Easter and one 'normal' Sunday service in October. The form though is limited in its ability to gather effective data about worship and children. It does not ask whether the attendance of children is for all or a part of these services. For example, in many churches Junior Church or Sunday School happens at the same time as the church service. Children may be present in the service at the beginning only, the end only or the beginning and end. In the service register the number of children (under the age of 16) is entered but this attendance may have been only for the opening hymn. In some cases the children may have their own session in the same building at the same time and their attendance recorded in the service register though they did not participate in the main service at all. The problem here is that empirical data is being gathered through a limited set of questions and with only the space to record a number. The form now includes a space to record Fresh Expressions of Church. Here there is space to list the title of the activity, the frequency and the numbers of adults and children attending. In the four churches where I currently serve, Messy Church has been listed as a Fresh Expression. However, the purpose of the form is to gather up to date information about patterns and trends in **worship** attendance. This then assumes an orthodox delivery of Messy Church with a worship component. The reality of Messy Church sessions I have experienced is that the primary focus is on developing a Christian/bible story theme through craft activities and games, and towards the end of the session the telling of the bible story (or story with related theme). There may be a short prayer spoken by an adult leader and possibly a song but little opportunity to reflect and be. The adults present watch the children take part rather than being together in a shared act of worship. Does a story and possibly a prayer constitute an act of worship?

In North America R E is highly organised by churches, more like RE in schools in Britain. Churches have been doing the job there that schools do here. The argument in the US though is that in churches there has been too

much of a focus upon learning the facts of the bible and the faith at the expense of the spiritual development of children. It is on the point of the spiritual flourishing of children that the literature I have looked at agrees. The argument being that through a focus upon active learning and the accumulation of knowledge children's spiritual formation has been neglected. The U.S. Literature (Clifton & S., Bunge, Beckwith et al) and UK lit (Nye et al) similarly identifies this problem of neglect of the spiritual formation of children and young people. Some also agree that it is through participating in the worshiping life of the whole community children are best nurtured, rather than in segregated, often age related groups.

Full participation in a mix of all ages is suggested but what does this mean and how is participation different from co-curation? This is a question which I did not address in Paper 2 but is clearly key to my research question. One fundamental difficulty is the question of children receiving Holy Communion, which again I did not address but I cannot side-step if my research focus is the spiritual formation of children in liturgical worship. The issue of power which I began to explore is important to the question of what full participation by children means in reality when each diocese and indeed each parish has different rules, guidelines and approaches to children and Holy Communion. In 2006 the General Synod of the Church of England agreed that baptism is full membership of the Church therefore baptised children could be admitted to Holy Communion

Has the study got ethical approval?
This research study has been granted ethical approval from Anglia Ruskin university, including approval for research involving the participation of children under the age of eighteen.

Has the Church given permission?
Permission has been given by the Bishop of Derby and St Edmund's Parochial Church Council for this research to take place. This gives me permission to approach you. The decision to take part is entirely yours.

Is the research funded?
My research is funded in part by the Women's Continuing Ministerial Education Trust of the Church of England and the rest is self-funded.

What will happen to the results of the study?
The results will be contained within my thesis, which is due for examination by the end of 2017. The results may also be published in academic journals and used by other churches.

Do you need more information?
If you would like further information about this research please contact me using the email and phone details at the end of the sheet.

Taking Part

What you will be asked to do.
You will be asked to attend at least four church services at St Edmund's between January and March 2016.

You will also meet five times with your research team. Each session will last about an hour. In the team you will share your responses to four questions about the services you have attended. All sessions will take place in the West End Room of St Edmund's Church.

Appendix 5. Verbatim journal extracts: Journal 2

Appendix 6. Participation Information Sheets

Sunday morning. I feel I am swimming against the tide. The swim? My desire to show to others that children are essential to the worshiping life of a sacramental church. That formal liturgies are not exclusive liturgies. That love and wonder are essential outcomes for all from sacramental worship.

The tide? Most people either trying to travel water avoiding either to swim with or swim against (& we they will be swept along) and those who feel if they are swimming with or being carried along it must be right. Swimming with the tide means thinking and singing what children need. That children need activity, fun, freedom. This can only happen in free worship, unrestrained from liturgical practice. Or better still, happening elsewhere, outside of the worship of the congregation.

This week my three co-researching teams have met. First the children: seven of them with a parent and two grans. One dying to grow. Three is an eighth - and she was. Wild is "wait is"? Otherwise, bright, happy children. I am looking forward to what they have to say. Then a telling remark from the Mum - Claire, Claire's also taking part in the community research group. She usually goes to church in a neighbouring evangelical parish. She has visions. Her Vicar needs to be heard too. Other telling remarks: what people - Mums say at the school gate, our local school (just down the road - that St Osmund's) is the format for children and grandkids - best not to go there.

And here we have it - the tide. Am I completely misguided to be swimming in the opposite direction? Making the impossible, possible?

2%

St Edmund's Church, Allenton and Shelton Lock
Action Research Project

Researcher: Revd Trudie Morris
Vicar of the parish

Co-curating Eucharistic Worship with Children

Participant Information Sheet

January 2016 No.3

Team B
Community

Consent forms will be kept separate from the information collected. You will be assigned a code number and any identifying information will be separated from the research data at the earliest opportunity.

You will be given a copy of your responses to the questions. These will help you feed back to the other teams. At the end of the research everyone will receive a written summary of the research findings.

Contact details for complaints

If at any point you wish to make a complaint about the research the person to contact is my supervisor: Dr Zoe Bennett:
Director of Postgraduate Studies in Pastoral Theology
Cambridge Theological Federation and Anglia Ruskin University

To access to Anglia Ruskin University's complaints procedure email:

Postal address:

You will have a copy of this Participant Information Sheet to keep, together with a copy of your Consent Form.

I do hope you will consider taking part in this research. I look forward to hearing from you if you would like further information, or by returning the attached Consent Form.

Best wishes
Trudie

Revd Trudie Morris

The Research Project

Why am I doing this research?

I hope to discover the spiritual impact on adults and children attending the Sunday Eucharist (service of Holy Communion) at St Edmund's church, if children are leading the service with adults. The leading or curating of worship is usually by the priest alone, or together with a few adults. In services co-curated or co-led with children, the children will be active participants leading the worship.

This research is towards my study for a Professional Doctorate in Practical Theology.

Why would I like you to help?

I am seeking adults and children to be co-researchers in finding out if worshiping with children makes a difference. Important to my research is to hear the voices of those who don't usually come to church.

I am keen to include a wide range of voices from the local community in this research to help all of us come to a better understanding of what people of all ages appreciate in worship. My role is to create teams of people who will meet together as co-researchers. I will record the discussions that take place and analyse the results.

Who will be taking part?

There will be three research teams. One of adults from the worshiping congregation, one of adults in the local community and one of any children aged between six and ten years old.

What will you gain by taking part?

You will be involved in live academic research.
It gives you an opportunity to tell us about your experience of church.

Can you refuse to take part?

This research is purely voluntary and I quite understand if you are unable to commit at this time.

There will be three teams:
Team A will be for children.
Team B will be for adults who do not usually go to church.
Team C will be for adults who go to church regularly at St Edmund's.
Each team has the same focus and the same questions.

The Dates and Times for Team B
These will be arranged to suit you once we know who will be taking part.

1st session to meet the rest of your team, to learn more about the research and to complete a simple questionnaire about yourself.

2nd session after you have attended at least one service.

3rd session after you have attended at least one more service.

4th session to prepare the feed back to the other teams and to complete a simple questionnaire about your experience of the project.

5th session when all the teams present their feed back to each other.

Will participation in the research be kept confidential?
It is not possible to keep confidential the people who are taking part as you all come from the local area.

Use of quotes
Real names will not be linked to any quoted responses in the research as these will be anonymised. To do this, your consent form will be given a number code which will be attached to your responses.

Use of recording equipment
I will be gathering your responses by making written notes and by making an audio recording of each session. This way I can check the accuracy of what I have noted.

Are there any disadvantages or risks to taking part?

You may find some aspects of the research rather boring or tiring. This is why sessions will be short and the questions limited to four. Church services usually last no more than an hour. There will be refreshments available. Sessions will be in a relaxed and informal environment. Toilets are available at both.

Each session will have an independent facilitator to ensure the wellbeing of all those taking part. The facilitator will also be part of the research team and able to deal with issues of confidentiality. Participation in this research does not affect your legal rights.

Can people stop taking part?

You may withdraw at any point and without giving a reason. You can do this via email, you don't have to tell me directly. If you begin then withdraw I will ask your permission to use any responses gathered up until that point.

Once all the data is gathered, that is by the end of March 2016, it will not be possible to withdraw your contributions to this research, as the process will have begun to analyse and write up the results.

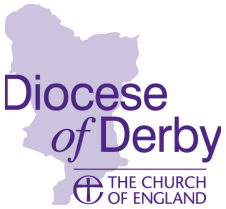
During the research programme you do not have to answer any questionnaire or discussion questions if you do not wish to.

There is nothing you need to prepare beforehand.

During the process there may be information you tell me, that I in turn may need to disclose to someone else. This would only be in the case of a risk to you, or anything of an illegal nature or that may be detrimental to the church or persons connected with the church.

What will happen to the information and data collected?

I will ensure it is securely held until the end of my degree (approximately end of 2017) after which period it will be destroyed.



Anglia Ruskin University

Cambridge Chelmsford Peterborough

St Andrew with St Osmund Derby
Action Research Project

Researcher: Revd Trudie Morris
Vicar

Co-curating Holy Communion with Children

Participant Information Sheet for Children

July 2015 No.6

Please ask a parent or older person to read this with you

About the Project

What is the research project about?
I would like to find out what people feel in a church service. I am keen to find out if people's feelings are different when children help to make the service happen.

Why have you been asked to take part?
I need children who would like to be co-researchers with me on the project. It doesn't matter whether or not you already come to church. Your help would be great and people at St Osmund's Church would like to know what you think and feel.

How many people will be taking part?
There will be three groups altogether so we can collect lot's of thoughts and feelings. You will be in a group of other boys and girls aged between six and ten years. There will also be two adult groups.

Why will it be good to take part?
You will be involved in a real research project.
You will be able to help to make the worship happen in church.
You will be able to tell adults what children think.
I think you will really enjoy it!

Do you have to take part?
We need your help but you don't have to if you don't want to.

What will happen afterwards?
What we find out will help St Osmund's and other churches plan services in the future.

Taking Part

What will you be asked to do?
The research is in two parts.

In the first part we would like you to come to at least two services at St Osmund's. You may come with a parent and sit with them.

After that you will meet with the other children in your group for an hour to talk about what you thought and felt when you were in church.

The second part of the research will happen in the same way, except that you and the other children will help the service to happen.

This means each of you will work with an adult to get things ready beforehand and to help them in the service.

Will others know I am taking part?
Other people will probably know you are taking part.

Will what I say be used?
What you say will be used as it will be very helpful to me in this research. But when I write about you I will not use your real name so no one will know it was you.

Another adult will sit in on the meetings to make written notes. I will also make an audio recording. This way I can check that everything has been written down correctly.

Is the research safe?
It is very safe. Each meeting will only be for an hour. There will be something to eat or drink. I will be at each meeting and there will be another adult to help as well.

You do not have to answer any questions if you do not wish to.

Can I change my mind about taking part?
You can stop at any point and without giving a reason. You can let me know through your parent or by telling me. Of course I really hope you will stay because your help is very important to this research.

If you begin and then stop I will ask your permission to use anything you have said up until that point.

What will happen to all the information we collect?
First, we will look at the information and talk about what everyone said.
Then we will tell the other groups what the children said.
After that everything we have found out will go into a book.

How can I start?
Your parent will be given the dates and times of your group meetings and when you will need to come to church. If you would like to take part your parent will need to fill in a Consent Form.

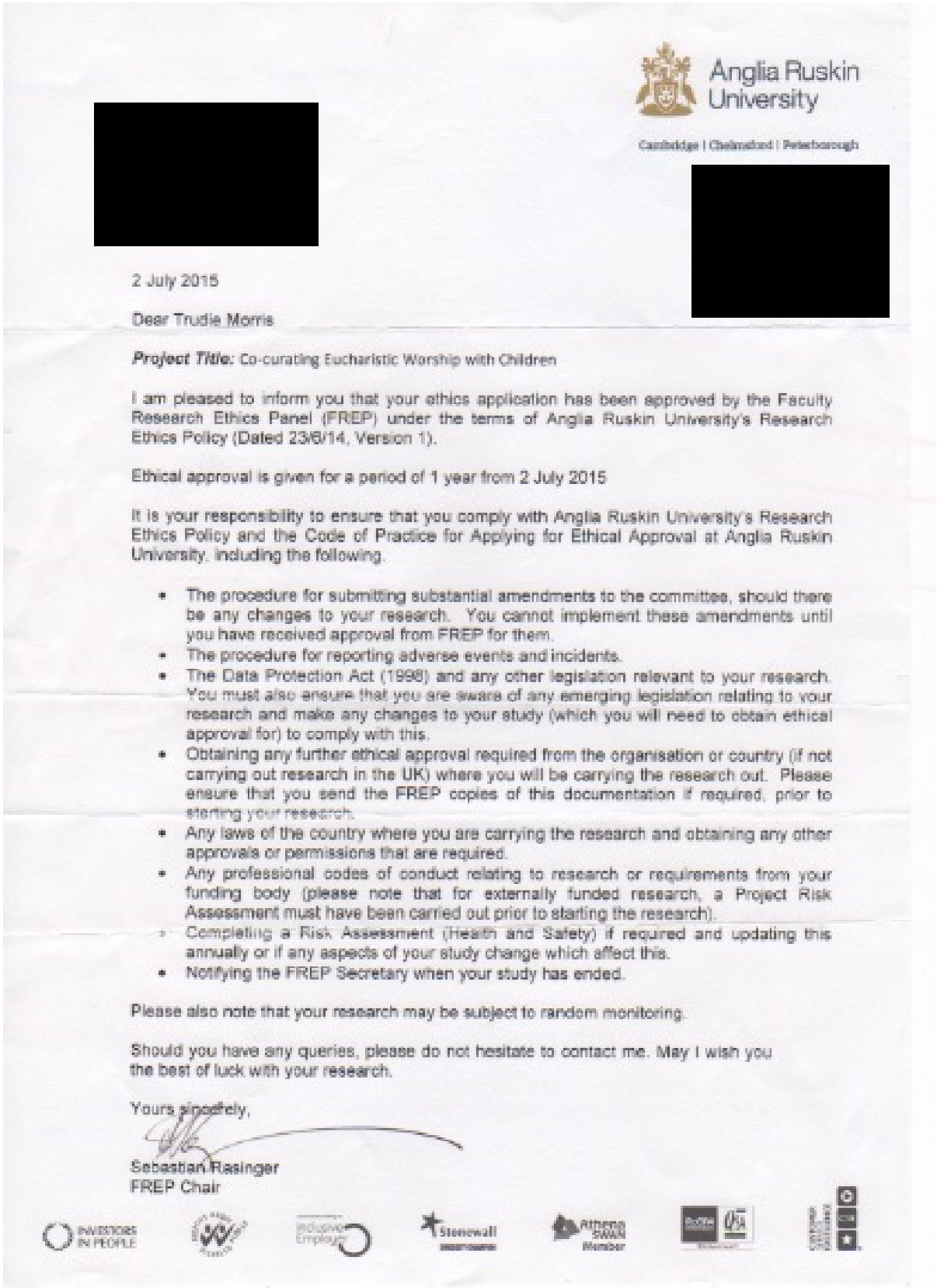
I do hope you will take part in this research with me.

Best wishes

Rev Trudie

Revd Trudie Morris

Appendix 7. Advanced ethics application and approval



Anglia Ruskin University

Cambridge | Chelmsford | Peterborough

[redacted]

[redacted]

2 July 2015

Dear Trudie Morris

Project Title: Co-curating Eucharistic Worship with Children

I am pleased to inform you that your ethics application has been approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Panel (FREP) under the terms of Anglia Ruskin University's Research Ethics Policy (Dated 23/6/14, Version 1).

Ethical approval is given for a period of 1 year from 2 July 2015

It is your responsibility to ensure that you comply with Anglia Ruskin University's Research Ethics Policy and the Code of Practice for Applying for Ethical Approval at Anglia Ruskin University, including the following.

- The procedure for submitting substantial amendments to the committee, should there be any changes to your research. You cannot implement these amendments until you have received approval from FREP for them.
- The procedure for reporting adverse events and incidents.
- The Data Protection Act (1998) and any other legislation relevant to your research. You must also ensure that you are aware of any emerging legislation relating to your research and make any changes to your study (which you will need to obtain ethical approval for) to comply with this.
- Obtaining any further ethical approval required from the organisation or country (if not carrying out research in the UK) where you will be carrying the research out. Please ensure that you send the FREP copies of this documentation if required, prior to starting your research.
- Any laws of the country where you are carrying the research and obtaining any other approvals or permissions that are required.
- Any professional codes of conduct relating to research or requirements from your funding body (please note that for externally funded research, a Project Risk Assessment must have been carried out prior to starting the research).
- Completing a Risk Assessment (Health and Safety) if required and updating this annually or if any aspects of your study change which affect this.
- Notifying the FREP Secretary when your study has ended.

Please also note that your research may be subject to random monitoring.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me. May I wish you the best of luck with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Sebastian Rasinger
FREP Chair

Appendix 8 Co-researchers' summaries of findings

Eucharists co-curated without children

Congregation Researchers St O

'We said we felt changed and uplifted by being in church. That St O is a hallowed place, a healing place, a place where grace is received, and fellowship and a sense of belonging found. That the power of the Holy Spirit is felt to be at work in us. One of us can't wait to get through the door and another is always struck by the beautiful words above the door. We felt it is where we leave the cares of the world behind and become involved and changed by the worship and want to take this out with us. One described being in church like being in a theatre. The church involves you because you are drawn into it by the crucifix, statues, candles, pictures and the way light comes through the windows. The church is beautiful in itself. One of us is reminded by words used, like "peace, praise and mercy" that we are in a holy place and how some words in the Creed: that Jesus is 'begotten not made' are like an absolute message that has made us different and that millions of people have been doing this for 1,700 years. Another feels close to God when saying the Lords' Prayer because it wraps around you. We all felt the importance of doing a job, that you become more involved and that it helps to complete you in some way. One of us who serves feels close and alongside those who have served before but who have died. Others felt the importance of supporting the worship team so that everything goes smoothly. Some of us felt the importance of singing together was an act of worship and singing the Gloria was like an amazing outpouring of joy and love. One of us said that being able to sing was God-given and she feels very close to God in the singing of the Sanctus.

Congregation Researchers St E

'For us, receiving the bread and the wine is very important. One of us thought the Confession very important too. We also thought that singing and the choice of hymns is very important to our experience of worship. The feeling of being part of the church family is also important to us. We thought that services made us feel better, refreshed and more positive. The worship gives us time to reflect and you are given just what you need at that time. One of us feels joy when singing but also worries quite a lot about how things will be. Another likes it when a sermon makes sense of a bible reading. Another sometimes feels anxious about how the children will be in church and what others will think. We feel really involved when giving the Peace but some of us would prefer to just share it with those around us because it becomes very complicated with so much movement around the church. One of us feels involved in the prayers and another when in the role of server because she feels more focussed. We feel that having a specific role helps you to be more involved though some tasks can be a distraction like being responsible for the music. One of us feels that she is involved by being present in the worship because she is offering something. One of us feels the pain of not being able to hold the chalice anymore because she can't control it. We feel that we come close to God and God comes close to us in singing the Holy Holy, in coming to receive Communion, particularly in going to the altar rail, and during the communion hymn afterwards. The lighting effects on the figure of the risen Christ to create the symbol of the Trinity is also a helpful focus in feeling the closeness of God. The sermon and readings can also draw us closer to God.

Community Researchers at St O

'One of us said that communion was the most important part of the service. It was an opportunity to reflect, to start again and that it was important and made them feel quite spiritual. She felt there wouldn't be much point to the service without communion. One said they liked going up to the altar and to be blessed. One said they liked the fact that all through the service things were jumping out, like remembering her family and connecting with things that were on her mind. For example, things that were being said and the words in the hymns. It felt like her family was present. This took her by surprise because she was quite nervous the first time but it was peaceful but also interactive with the sharing of the Peace. It was also emotional at times but also comforting. Another said it was good to be able to just go and listen. One also said that bringing someone else with her the next week was nice because she had been going through a rough time. One said the words were very helpful in coming closer to God. The words made you question things and then the answer was there. For another with a small child the worship had to be more for their benefit but the communion was the little bit where they would sit quietly and have a blessing and that was when she came closest to God. She said those feelings would change though in a service without children but you would lose some things like the small child seeing the bread broken and telling everyone the whole entire day that it was broken so everyone could share it. Another said she normally liked being entertained, for example by puppets and sing-along songs and not having to fight her way through a book. But she also liked the difference at St O and seeing children being part of it. She liked the fact that it was just really peaceful and to see her child gaining from it.

Community Researchers at St E

'We felt that receiving communion, receiving blessings and sharing the Peace were important to us. At these times we felt we were coming together as one, like a family, and that we were accepted. We felt it to be a very peaceful time and that everyone was there for the same reason. We had feelings of peace, a sense of being part of something bigger, of being part of a family and of being refreshed by the worship. We felt the worship was different to our everyday lives and that was a good thing. It gave us something more. One of us felt empowered by the worship. Some of us felt involved in Communion, the smiling faces in the Peace and the singing, and the prayers as they reminded us that we are part of something bigger. Some of us felt lost with the books and that it seemed everyone else knew what they were doing and we didn't. Some of us loved the all age service and felt really involved and part of something all the time. We found having the screen very helpful. Some of us came close to God in the prayers and for some, being at the altar was very special.

Child Researchers at St O

'At our first meeting we talked about what it was like to be in a service at St O. We said that we liked the singing, receiving the bread and wine, being blessed and praying. We said that doing these things sometimes made us feel happy, peaceful, relaxed and that sometimes these feelings were unusual. Receiving bread and wine and being blessed also made us feel important. It was like going to God and having bread and wine was like eating Jesus. Some of us felt we came close to God and God came close to us when we received bread and wine and when we were praying. We felt that God was listening and was next to us. Also when being blessed that God felt very close. Also we felt close to God in the singing because we're praising the Lord. Sharing the Peace was also very important to us. People spoke to us and said "very well done". It made us feel proud of ourselves. When we gave the Peace it was like shaking hands with God. Some of us also thought that the service felt like a whole prayer and we could talk to God and join in. Some of us also liked being involved in the sermon and we liked the salt and the fire very much and when we made something together. It made us feel involved. Feeling important came up in our discussion a lot. Some of us felt important because we were doing something together with others and we were all part of it. We also liked it when we dipped the rosemary in the holy water and sprinkled everybody.

Child Researchers at St E

'Some of us thought the most important part of the service was Holy Communion. We also thought the whole service was important because there were new things to learn. Being part of a community was important. We thought the All Age Eucharist made us feel part of something, like we fitted in, that it was exciting and we were learning things. In the worship on other Sundays we sometimes felt bored during the readings but also happy in the singing and in Holy Communion. The feeling was like being closer to church and more part of it. One of us felt a bit scared at the time of Holy Communion because they didn't know whether to go and receive or not so they didn't. Next time they would like to. Another felt the singing was a bit boring but felt happy the rest of the time. Some of us liked creating the scene in the desert as part of the sermon. It helped us to understand. One of us felt part of things when receiving the bread and the wine, others when sharing the Peace and others that they didn't feel left out at all and felt there was something new to learn each service. Some of us felt closer to God in receiving Holy Communion and in receiving a blessing, another that they came closer to God through being with the people, another when we did the Peace and another when hearing the bible readings.

Eucharists co-curated with children

Congregation researchers at St O

'We thought that children helping to make the worship happen had a positive impact and that it worked on all sorts of levels. The fellowship of the children was important and they appeared delighted to be taking part. They made a bigger presence and enhanced the worship by reinforcing its meaning and focus. There was an added dimension and sense of beauty about it. One described this as the peace of God. The children had a natural reverence and one of us working with the children was amazed at the stillness, focus, willingness, total involvement and depth of spirituality of the children. Some thought that it was lovely seeing and feeling the presence of the children but it didn't have an impact on their own worship. Another thought it did enhance their connection with God because they were a witness in their wanting to give. One thought that a child's movements mirroring those of the priest made her feel uncomfortable like a line had been crossed. Another that the community was reinventing itself. For some these feelings were particularly felt in receiving The Eucharist alongside children. One was particularly moved by a child echoing the words: "the body of Christ". We thought children helping to make the worship happen was about both present and future. One of us wanted to see the children even more included and official by having something to wear. Another was vey conscious of helping the children grow in their journey and that she was being a role model for those who would be doing her job one day.

Congregation researchers at St E

'We noticed that children were present with the altar party. Some of us thought they were not a distraction to our worship but one did feel her eyes were drawn to the children when they were fidgeting. We thought it was good to see from their faces that the children were enjoying it and it was helpful to our worship to see this. It was good to see the children so interested in what they were doing. Those of us who serve found that at times the children were helping us rather than the other way round. It became a partnership. It felt perfectly natural as though it happened every Sunday and we would be very happy for it to continue. It was moving seeing the children with their candle. Some of us who were working with the children felt more relaxed, and felt moved when the children took the lead and helped us. For those of us in the congregation our feelings didn't really change. There were no negative feelings. If anything we would have welcomed the children doing more. It felt so natural for the children to be there and close to us at Communion. It just seemed like a normal service for some of us and didn't change our involvement but it was good to see the children were obviously enjoying it. For others of us the worship felt enhanced. It felt heart-warming that all of the children were involved and were focused on what was going on and for the servers this helped them to feel more involved in the worship experience. One of us felt closer to God at Communion because a child was alongside those distributing the bread and the wine. They felt it would have been quite natural for the child to have given this. Another of us thought it felt more like the family of God, that we were one family, especially when we prayed together with the children in the vestry beforehand.

Community researchers at St O

'We thought children helping to make the worship happen seemed natural and did not detract from the worship at all. But at the same time it did not deepen our worship experience. It was good to see the children involved and learning about different aspects of what they were doing. One thought the children might be doing things like reading and she might have got more from that. We gained pleasure from seeing how much the children got out of the experience. We all thought however, that the worship works whether children are helping to make it happen or not though one said now they have they would miss it and their child would be quite put out if not invited to help again.

Community researchers at St E

'We felt children being alongside the servers and the priest was really special. We saw the pride and joy and sense of achievement on the children's faces. It was very important to see a child understanding things at the altar and reading to the congregation as well. Seeing children wanting to do things and learn about God was very important to us. We liked seeing children getting involved and bringing a sense of wonder to the worship. Seeing children involved opened up and interpreted the worship for us. We felt it brought us closer to others in church. Seeing children making the worship happen made us feel really positive about the whole thing, because if the children are present in worship God's not going to be forgotten in generations to come because the children will carry it on. It made us feel that the children were welcomed and really part of church. We felt the children were valued. This was very different to our experience of church as children. We liked that the children didn't seem inhibited by taking part in processions and being alongside adults. We found we were more involved when children were helping to make the worship happen. We felt closer to everything and paid more attention to what everyone was doing. Children do things in a different way to adults and they are less self-conscious and this made us more involved. We felt the children helped us to draw closer to God as we watched what they were doing and the way they did their actions amplified our experience of God. We would like children helping to make the worship happen continue because the whole worship is more intergenerational and we can all learn about God and experience him through each other: young and old. We felt that for the children it was a massive achievement.

Child researchers at St O

'At our second meeting we talked about helping to make the worship happen. Some of us said that we liked going to receive bread and wine with someone who was not our parent. It made it feel different. When we were at the front helping to make the worship happen it was really serious. Being looked at by loads of people made some of us feel very important. When we moved round the church in processions and especially in the Gospel procession we felt very special and important. Everyone was very close to us. Some of us said it felt important because we were learning as well as having fun. We were learning about how everyone has a different job but fun whilst we were doing it. Some of us liked it especially when we were with the priest so we got to walk around more and do different things and go right to the front in the middle to the big table. Some of us also felt important when we got to do different things like give out flowers and taking a flower up to the organist and it was really cool. Some of us especially liked doing new things and if we come and work at the church we will know what to do. But we also felt it's like we already have a job. It's like there are two people doing each thing and it's a real job to do. Some of us also felt that doing different work was good and whatever we were doing it was important. Some of us felt if we did it again we would like to carry something like the person we were with so would be acting more like them so basically doing the same job as them, which is more fun. Some of us felt very nervous to begin with but excited as well. Some of us felt we were coming more close to God because of doing more things and helping more people and that it was like being Jesus's partner. People were very kind and we were happy to be with them. They made us feel comfortable with

what we were doing. We also said that we could talk and be natural with the person we were with and we didn't have to hide anything. We liked it that we felt part of a team and that the adults always thanked us and praised us after we had done things. Some said that they felt really involved rather than watching the worship happen. One of us said that taking part was like being a piece in the puzzle of church. Being part of the actual worship and helping to make it happen was like being a big piece of the puzzle of church.

Child researchers at St E

'One of us felt important being with the person preparing the table and seeing the bread broken because they were close to where it was happening and learnt how things were done. Others of us felt important in receiving the bread and the wine and when praying to God. For one of us it brought back memories of going to church with their aunty. We felt it was important being light bearers. Being a light bearer to help make the worship happen made us feel part of something, that the whole of us was involved. We were comfortable and not scared. We were happy in being with people who helped us and we could talk to them and trust them. We could understand more of how the service happens. It made us feel proud and it was a good feeling to be told we were doing a good job. We really enjoyed the singing. It was special being close to people when they were receiving the bread and the wine. Some of us felt closer to God when receiving bread and wine, when receiving the flowers and doing things with others. One of us thought that stepping up to bow was like bowing to God, like giving a gift to him and sometimes receiving a gift. One of us said it felt like stepping into the village where Jesus was and where he died, like being in Jesus's space. One of us said they felt proud seeing their sister from Sunday School come forward

to talk about what she had made. Another said that being in church felt like God is looking after their Granddad who died, and that he is in safe hands. We enjoyed helping to make the worship happen and we would like to do it again so we can learn more of what happens in church to make the worship happen and how the jobs work and to get to know the people more. This is what we learnt at church.